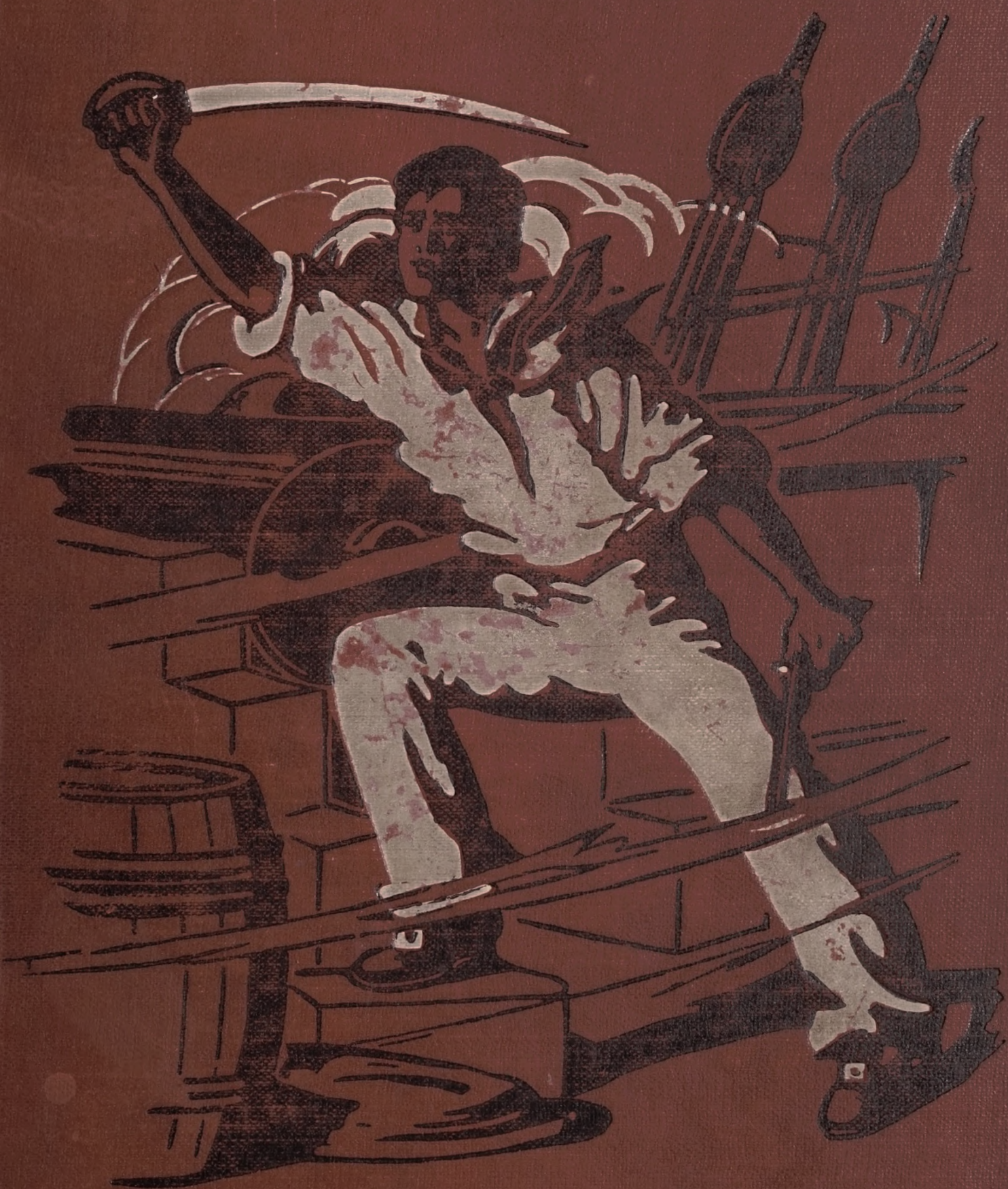


# THE YOUNG PRIVATEERSMAN



WILLIAM O. STEVENS  
AND  
MCKEE BARCLAY





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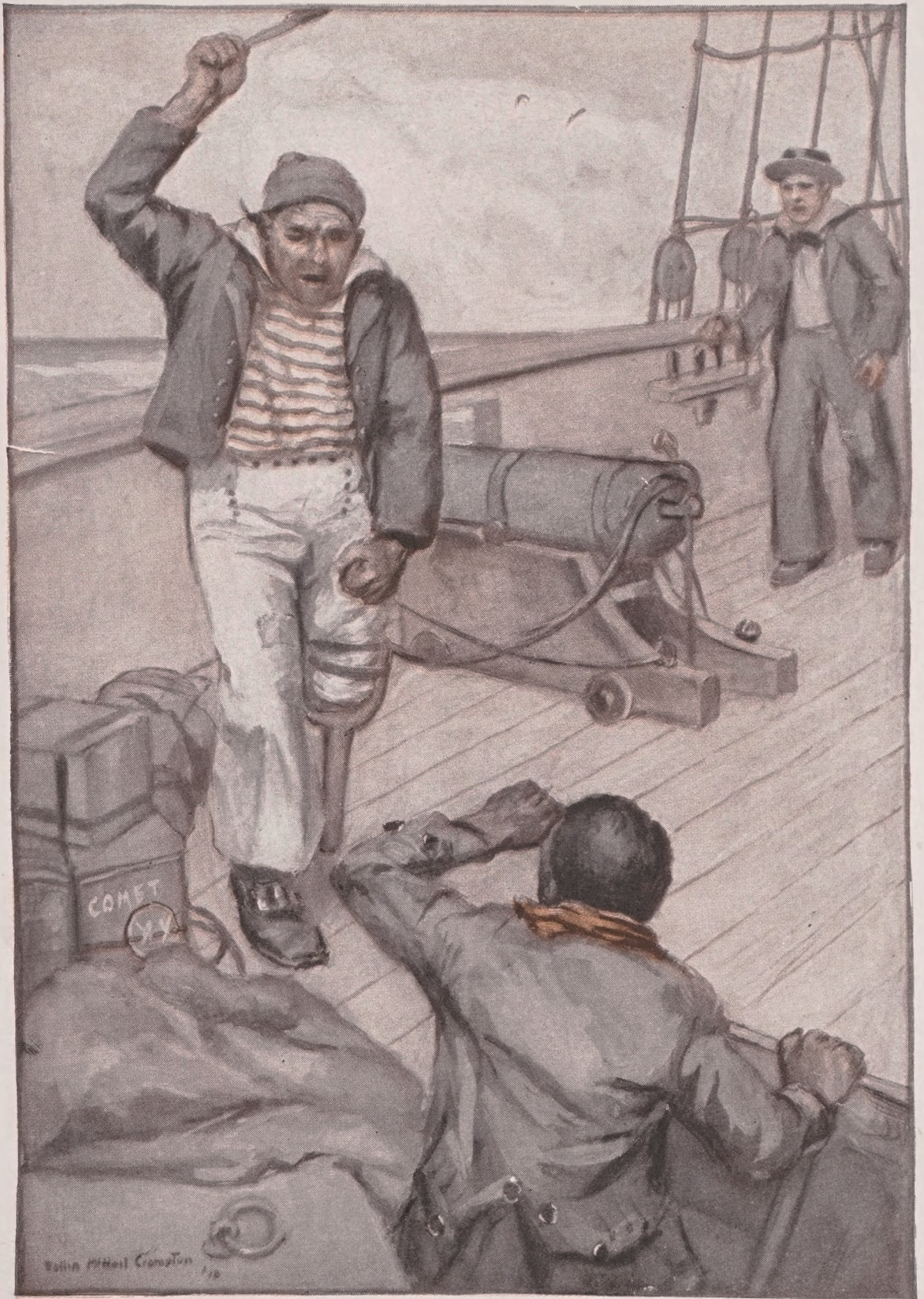












“The sailor drew his sheath knife and let drive viciously”

[Page 24]



*The*  
YOUNG PRIVATEERSMAN

*By*  
WILLIAM O. STEVENS  
*and* McKEE BARCLAY



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DEDICATED TO  
THEODORE ROOSEVELT  
WHO HAS DONE SO MUCH TO INSPIRE  
THE PATRIOTIC AMERICAN BOY







## FOREWORD

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As no red-blooded boy wastes his time reading prefaces, this is written for the eye of the grown-up who looks at this book and wonders what it is all about. To him we would say that "The Young Privateersman" contains actual American history; and not only that, but history that is wholly unknown to most Americans. The privateers *Comet*, *General Armstrong*, and *Chasseur* were real ships; Captains Barney, Boyle, Reid, Dr. McGrath, and Mr. Dabney were real men; Dartmoor prison was a real prison, and the wonderful fights off Pernambuco and at Fayal were matters of fact. If the escape of Miles Gadsden from Dartmoor prison seems improbable, it can be said that one young American escaped exactly as described; and though the odds in the battles off Pernambuco or Fayal may seem fanciful, nevertheless they are a matter of printed record. In the case of the latter engagement, for example, we followed the



## FOREWORD

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reports of Captain Reid himself, supplemented by the later testimony of Portuguese officials, and the account written by our consul at Fayal, Mr. Dabney, who was an eyewitness. The gallantry and the invaluable service of certain privateersmen in the War of 1812 are facts that have been overlooked, and these facts "The Young Privateersman" would bring to the mind of every American boy who honors courage in defense of the flag.

THE AUTHORS.



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# THE YOUNG PRIVATEERSMAN

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## CHAPTER I

### LOOKING FOR A BERTH

**D**URING the closing weeks of the year 1812 Baltimore presented an interesting picture. Soldiers and man-o'-warships thronged her streets and wharves, and her taverns were ringing with the shouts and laughter of boisterous privateersmen who were lavishly scattering their easy-come-easy-go prize money. These roystering sea-fighters were looked upon with easy tolerance by the merchants of the city, for besides being their country's gallant defenders they were liberal spenders of the prize money. For this reason, especially, they were welcomed by the shopkeepers, and their horse-play was tolerated in the taverns; but in the residence districts, when they hove in sight, peace-loving, respectable Baltimoreans closed their shutters and retired indoors.

One crisp afternoon, a week before Christmas, a guest of the Three Tuns Tavern, a well-dressed lad of seventeen, stood on the Paca Street side of the



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inn listening to a noisy argument between two seafaring vagabonds as to the relative merits of their favorite privateers, the *Grampus* and the *Dolphin*. Suddenly his attention was attracted by roars of laughter and excited shouts from behind the high board fence that shut the little back yard away from the street. He turned from the disputants, saw through the gateway the aproned figure of the tavern keeper, old Rudolph Van den Berg, bouncing comically about in a vain endeavor to get a look through the knot of howling men that surged around the inclosure.

The youth elbowed into the crowd, his first glimpse disclosing a one-legged man who was nimbly hopping about as he flourished an inflated bladder tied to the end of a stick with which he was belaboring another man similarly armed. The second bladder-wielder proved also to be minus one member, his left arm being replaced by an iron hook which stuck out a few inches from a sleeve that flapped loosely as he danced about, dodging the blows of his enemy and whacking back in return. The two duelists wore paper foolscaps for helmets, which each tried to guard with his free arm—or hook, as it was in the case of one.

“My hat against a dollar that Pegleg unhats



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him!" screamed a black-bearded little Spaniard as he backed away to give the contestants full play.

"I takes yo'," shouted a gigantic negro, clinking a silver dollar on the pavement under the feet of the two combatants. Distracted for an instant by the sight of the coin, the one-legged man lowered his guard, when "twack" came a blow that knocked his helmet from his head, a shapeless crumple of paper. The negro dived for the dollar, and quickly confronted the proposer of the bet with "Gimme dat hat!" Without a protest the other handed over his weather-beaten cocked hat and joined the crowd that rushed to the tavern bar to drink at the expense of the loser of the battle.

Meanwhile the youth, who had arrived just in time to see the finish of the duel, sought out the negro.

"Betting again, Herk?"

With a comically crestfallen look the black giant answered hesitatingly, "I jes' couldn' he'p it, Marse Miles. It was dat Spanish monkey wanted to bet on de wooden-legged sailor man. I won't do it ag'in, 'pon my soul I won't."

"Well, let it pass," laughed his young master, "but did you hear anything from Captain Barney, while I was away?"



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“Naw, sah, ain’t hyeard nuthin’—Lawdy, look yander!” exclaimed the darky, pointing up the street.

Approaching at a lively singlefoot was a little roan mare ridden by a burly red-faced sailor who sat all askew in a pretended attempt to steer the nag around the corner by swinging her tail as a rudder. In his left hand he carried a small boat anchor with a coil of rope attached to his saddle.

“She don’t mind her hellum worth a tin rupee!” he shouted as he let go the tail and hauled on the reins, bringing his steed up with a flourish to the curb where the two interested spectators stood. Drawing up to Herk the rider threw the rein over his horse’s head and roared, “Bear a hand there and make her fast!” at the same time shying his anchor at the hitching post.

The innkeeper, attracted by the commotion, appeared at the door just as the sailor, who had dismounted, was burying a prong of his anchor in a joint of the curbing. “Ahoy there, mine host!” roared the tar. “Do you know aught of one Miles Gadsden, you poison-selling swab?”

“Dis yere is Marse Miles,” put in the negro, indicating his companion with a wave of his newly won hat.



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Removing his own head-covering of varnished oil-cloth, the sailor fished from it a letter and presented it to the young man, with a great flourish, saying: "With Captain Barney's compliments, sir!"

When the lad had run through the contents, he said hastily, "Get our kits, Herk; we're going to leave."

Ten minutes later the two were trudging eastward in the direction of the shipping district. The negro was such a striking figure that passersby turned and stared. He was coal-black, standing about six feet four, broad in proportion, with large brass rings in his ears; and as he walked he made a curious, low humming noise through his lips. Though smaller in volume, it was similar in a way to what might be expected from a miniature horn, though it ran up and down the scale like an Æolian harp.

Though his master, Miles Gadsden, looked dwarfed by his side, he was in reality a cleanly built, strong young fellow of seventeen, with a fresh color and light yellowish hair that made the contrast with his inky companion all the more striking. He had come the day before from his home in Annapolis to meet, by appointment, his father's friend, Captain Joshua Barney, a famous sea-fighter of the Revolu-



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tionary War, whose recently ended cruise in the privateer *Rossie* was still the talk of the town. With Barney's backing he had tried to get a midshipman's warrant in the navy, but to his intense chagrin had failed. Captain Barney had written him that, as a consolation prize, he thought he could secure for him a berth on the privateer *Comet*, which had just returned from a cruise that rivaled the success of the *Rossie*.

So it was that after days of being in the dumps over his disappointment, Miles set out for Baltimore with his body-servant "Herk"—to meet Captain Barney. Herk, too, had been promised a berth below decks on the *Comet* and was jubilant over the prospect of seeing the world beside his beloved young master. To the darky, the sight and sounds of a city street were as wonderful as a foreign land. As the two passed down the street, Herk would stop every now and then to stare open-mouthed at the gorgeous yellow stagecoaches, or the big Conestoga wagons from the West, with their long, blue, flat-boat-shaped bodies and white canvas tops, and their eight-horse teams jingling with clusters of bells. A sale at the old slave market, the busy scenes at the tobacco warehouses, furnished temptations to loiter, but finally they reached the "Basin," or inner har-



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bor, and found themselves among the busy scenes of the water front.

When they rounded the cave that makes in under Federal Hill, they came upon a knot of privateersmen skylarking like so many schoolboys. Evidently, part of the captured cargoes had consisted of dainty merchandise, for some of these strapping fellows had wound themselves up in yards upon yards of many-colored silks and were brandishing parasols in both hands. Another group amused themselves by worrying several drovers who were unloading cattle and forcing them along the runway on the wharf. One maudlin sailor lurched up to the gangway, threw his arms around the neck of a cow, kissed her on the nose and crammed a banknote into her mouth. Turning to Herk as the latter followed his young companion around the corner, he called out with a silly leer, "I'll give her a good cud to chew on. Come here, Sambo! Buss her on the snoot for luck." The crowd guffawed, but, disdaining to answer, the black giant followed his master in and out among the boxes of merchandise that littered the wharf.

They passed around the edge of the fort that overlooked the harbor, and Herk noticed that Miles began to look anxiously in all directions. He was about to ask if they were at their journey's end when



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there was a hail from a bug-eye that swung at the stern of a three-masted schooner. There, waving at them a wide-brimmed beaver hat, sat a thickset man wearing a blue coat, black stock and ruffled shirt. He had a military air that could not be concealed by his civilian dress.

“This way,” he called; “jump aboard the schooner, Miles, and I’ll send a dinghy over to you.”

Clambering over to the deck of the schooner, Miles and Herk made their way aft just as a skiff was pushed across to them. The bug-eye had evidently been held for their coming, for no sooner were they aboard and hurried greetings exchanged than her canvas was spread and she swung to midstream.

“When did you get in town, Miles?” asked the older man as they headed down the harbor toward Fort McHenry.

“Three days ago, sir.”

“Well, I’m sorry you didn’t hear from me sooner, but the delay was unavoidable. For the last fortnight I have been delayed in Philadelphia, where I had to go to settle with one of the owners of the *Rossie*. If I were only reshipping in her, lad, I’d be delighted to take you aboard, but you know I am to leave salt water and stay quietly at home for a while. Mistress Barney is far from well and needs me more



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than my country does. By the way, what news from home and what of your father? ”

“ Why, mother sent her kind regards and told me to ask you if you and Mrs. Barney can give her a visit. She’s rather cut up about my going to war, especially since father——”

“ Lord love us, no bad news I hope? ” cried Captain Barney anxiously.

“ Well, not as bad as it might be,” replied Miles, “ but father’s ship, the *Eagle*, had the ill luck to be overhauled by a frigate early last month and he’s now a prisoner. The *Eagle’s* owners got word from London last week, and they sent a letter to mother saying that as the vessel had been taken without resistance, father must be unhurt and merely waiting exchange or release on parole.”

“ Too bad, too bad; but it might be worse, as you say. And I was just thinking what a pity you didn’t ship with your father last summer, as long as the midshipman business fell through. It’s well now you didn’t. I suppose you got my letter about that unlucky business? ”

“ Yes, sir, but——”

“ Oh, well, I know you were disappointed, lad, and so was I. Commissions in the navy somehow run nowadays only to families with influence and wealth.



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I thought the name of Joshua Barney would have enough weight, but times have changed." The good-humored face darkened. "You see," he explained, "when I refused to be rated below Si. Talbot in the captain's list and resigned to accept a captaincy in the French navy, the department got plaguey sore on me—confound 'em for a set of white-livered lawyers!"

"But your last letter," ventured Miles after a pause, "said I might ship on the *Comet*. Did you succeed with Captain Boyle? Everyone says that he is second to none but Captain Barney."

The older man beamed again as he said: "Ha, then there are some who haven't forgotten me, eh?"

"Forgotten you? Why, they say your last cruise was the most successful made since war was declared last June!"

"That's no more than the truth. I have been in Philadelphia over a month now going over the account with the other owners and we find that the *Rossie* captured 3,700 tons of shipping, which we estimate to be worth fully a million and a half. But now as to your prospects, my lad. Captain Boyle is a man who has to be handled by some one who knows his quirks, and if I do say it myself, no one knows him better than I. He was as gruff as a sore-headed



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bear when I mentioned what I wanted for you and told me shortly that he had all the seamen he wanted, some officers to spare, and didn't hanker for passengers. I smoothed him and wheedled him, and though I didn't get a definite promise I'll warrant you will be signing the articles on the *Comet* within an hour. There she lies now, past the stern of that four-master."

Miles looked, eagerly following the direction of Captain Barney's finger, and saw a large topsail schooner with two raking masts and with lines as sharp as any racing craft. He saw, as they drew nearer, two large guns—"long-toms," as they were called—mounted amidships on swivels, so that they could be trained with either broadside. The bulwarks also were cut for five gun parts on a side.

She had docked a short distance north of Fort McHenry at a long, rather flimsy-looking wharf and, as the bug-eye swung in almost under her stern, Miles studied the scene with interest. There was an incessant din of rattling trucks and creaking windlasses, out of which came the sharp staccato notes of the mates' voices, as they urged the sweating stevedores to their tasks. A procession of heavily laden negro longshoremen streamed up the gangplank, seemingly in imminent danger of being knocked overboard by



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others, some of whom were pushing trucks within an inch of the burden bearers, while others, empty-handed, hurried toward a boatswain's mate, who frantically urged them to greater speed with dire threats and much profanity. As the mate saw Captain Barney's little craft swing into the wharf, his hand went to his hat in quick salute and the swearing broke off in the middle. "How are you, Captain Barney? Are you going to help us clear the sea of the British?" he said, while the negroes stopped to gaze open-mouthed at the name of the man whose fame was known to all of them.

"No," answered Barney as he walked by, "I'm marooned for the present, but it will not be long before I'm off again, I suppose."

The mate touched his hat and, instantly, as he caught sight of the gaping negroes, bawled savagely: "Why, dang my grandmother's half-sister's tortoiseshell cat, what the blazes are you tar-faced monkeys standin' there fer, with your eyes popped out like a bunch o' poisoned rats when—*bear* a hand there, or I'll cut a half a hogshead o' blood out o' your backs, you——"

The rest of the mate's exhortation was lost to Miles as he and Barney drew nearer to the rumbling trucks. The young man noticed that others of the



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boatswain's mates recognized Captain Barney, and their very evident admiration and respect for his friend made him feel that he was shining in reflected glory, so that he followed his sponsor up the forward gangplank to the *Comet's* spar deck with considerable self-complacency.

“Ah, there's your skipper, Miles!” exclaimed Captain Barney.

Standing by the capstan, Miles saw a big-framed, bull-necked Irishman, with piercing gray eyes under black brows, roaring orders through a wide mouth, round which the shorn beard showed blue-black under his skin. His sturdy thick legs were planted apart, his arms were akimbo, and the scowl on his face showed him to be in anything but a pleasant humor.



## CHAPTER II

### ABOARD THE PRIVATEER

UNFORTUNATELY, the delayed arrival of some barrels of potatoes had put him out of humor, and at the moment of Miles's arrival on board the *Comet* he was fairly spluttering with temper. His reply to Captain Barney's greeting was almost churlish, but the latter affected not to notice any slight. With a significant wink at Miles, he said, "Boyle, here's this friend of mine, Miles Gadsden; I want you to make him a fine seaman and a hard fighter and, egad, no one can do it so well as you."

Boyle turned unceremoniously to bawl an order at the mates who were driving the longshoremen at their loading, and Barney took the instant to grasp the boy's hand and say, "Good-by and good luck, lad; I'll keep my eye on you."

Then, turning to Boyle, he added, "There he is," with a wave of the hand toward Miles; "I leave him with you."



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"Well, leave him then!" snorted Boyle.

"If you don't want him, throw him overboard, you bog-trotting, burgoo-swilling Irishman!" answered Barney, and he chuckled as he turned on his heel.

Miles thought that he saw an encouraging twinkle in the testy Hibernian's eye, in spite of the gruff voice that said, "Take your black dwarf and get below! We need all the deck room we can get. Find the bos'n!"

He turned to obey; Herk picked up the boxes that contained their modest outfits and followed him to the ladder.

At the foot of the ladder Miles almost collided with some one whose outlines he could barely distinguish in the semi-darkness.

"Hard a-port, sonny, or you'll foul me!" roared a voice; "what's this three-decker you're a-convoyin'?"

"I beg your pardon," answered Miles. "Just coming out of the light, I couldn't see you."

"Blame's on me, sir! Why, it's Mr. Gadsden; I seen you talkin' to the skipper."

"Yes, and this is Hercules. Neither of us has been assigned to duty, but Captain Boyle says the boatswain will find us temporary quarters."



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“Well, I’m him—which is to say, the bos’n; an’ I make bold to say it hain’t no trouble to figger what to do with you, Mr. Gadsden, but I’m afeared we’ll have to let what’s-his-name—er—Goliath——”

“Hercules,” prompted Miles.

“Yes, Herkumlees, he’ll have to hang his feet out the hawse holes, bein’ how’s the *Comet* hain’t more’n two or three hundred foot beam.”

“Don’t worry about Herk,” laughed Miles; “he’ll fold up like a jackknife and fit in anywhere.”

“Well, foller me with your kit; the skipper says you’ll have to stow yerself the best you kin here with us. We’ve got more’n a full complement ’tween decks as ’tis now.”

With this, the boatswain led the way through a dark, stuffy passage into the steerage where by the light of a swinging lantern Miles got a good look at his guide. The old tar had removed his oilcloth hat, and as he pointed out the small sea chest and hammock that had been assigned to the boy, his stiff iron-gray hair stood up in a bristly pompadour, which, combined with his curiously elevated eyebrows, gave to the weather-beaten face an expression of comical astonishment. Back of the lattice-work of deep furrows that seamed his neck hung a tarry queue with a funny outward turn at the end. He



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wore the short side-whiskers so generally affected by seamen of the period, and the upper half of one of his ears was missing. This suggested to the boy a future narration of exciting adventures—perhaps a desperate hand-to-hand encounter. Miles noticed that, although the boatswain was evidently nearing three-score, his eyes were keen, his teeth strong, and his movements quick with the energy of a man thirty years younger. A distended cheek and a trickle of amber liquid following the wrinkles at the corners of his mouth showed that he took his tobacco “like a Christian,” as the saying went among the older seamen who despised smoking as effeminate. As the old fellow turned to speak to Herk, his voice changed from the kindly tone he had adopted toward Miles, and he bawled in a deep bass, “Hard a-lee, Sambo, foller in my wake; your billet’s forrard with the cook. Wait till I move this African ship-of-the-line, Mr. Gadsden, an’ I’ll come back with the skipper’s orders.” With this last sample of nautical talk, which Miles found later was one of the old fellow’s pet affectations, he disappeared with the negro.

Herk had left, grimacing and grinning like a Cheshire cat, and his good humor at the prospect of a scullion’s duties in the galley shamed Miles into



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trying to take his own medicine like a man. "The idea of a gentleman herding with petty officers in a pen like this," he thought half aloud. Even as he bent his head he barely missed the beams above, and three strides took him across the widest dimension of the room. The air was foul and permeated with the horrible odor of the "bilge" water in the hold. The timbers were moldy with dampness and, even as he stood looking about him, a huge rat scurried into a corner. As the boy remembered his former dreams of rank and glory in the navy, he felt miserably homesick and lonely. There was a moistening of the eye and a quiver of the lip that made him welcome the return of the friendly boatswain.

"Now, Mr. Gadsden, what d'ye know about a ship?" asked the old man, as he cut a generous chew of "Maryland niggerhead" and stowed it in his cheek.

"Well, I know something about small schooners, droggers, and the like, but my knowledge of fighting ships isn't great. To tell the truth, Mr. Todd——"

"Just plain Todd, lad! It's a good, easy, convenient coganomin ter handle. So ye have had enough real hard work to be *part* of a sailor, anyhow?"

"Yes," said Miles, "but I realize that I have a



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lot to learn about handling sails, especially square sails, and I hope you'll see to it that I know enough not to be ashamed to have Captain Boyle about when I'm on duty."

"To be sure! I'll warrant you there won't be a bolder, smarter seaman on the *Comet* in a fortnight's time," answered the old fellow heartily. "I'll be glad to larn you all alow and aloft. So far so good. Now, fust, your station is on the lee side of the quarter deck, in the main, and you'll have to git spry furlin' light sails, when the watch is called to shorten canvas. Fact is, a lot'll depend on what you amount to, as to how you'll fare under Cap'n Boyle, lad. Of course ther ain't no midshipmen aboard a privateer like what there is on a reel reg'lar navy vessel. Now, when I wuz on the *Richard* with Captain Jones there was a little middy that——"

"Did you serve with Paul Jones?" asked Miles, awe-struck at the thought of being in the presence of a real hero.

"Wot! Didn't Cap'n Barney tell you? 'Did I serve with Cap'n Jones?' Why, bless my soul, d'ye think I belong on a bilgy privateer along wi' a lot o' lousy sons o' double Dutchmen like this yere lot o' rascallions in the fo'c's'le for messmates! Why, shiver my timbers! I'll take my davy John



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Paul Jones'd turn over in his grave if he only knowed Bill Todd was makin' a v'yage in a—but I beg your parding, lad; you didn't know you wuz foul'in' my hawse."

"Why, I'm sure Mr.—eh, I mean Todd, I didn't know, really, and I must beg your pardon, not you beg mine," quickly answered Miles, for he saw that the old man's record as a Revolutionary War fighter was a sacred hobby with him and he was anxious to cater to what he considered a very pardonable weakness.

"Well," said the boatswain, somewhat mollified by Miles's show of respect, "I'll stow that, but it sartin rubs me wrong for a lot o' derved swabs to put 'emselves ekal with a man what fit with Paul Jones on a real man-o'-war." He spat mournfully, but with deadly precision, at a swiftly gliding cockroach, which waded out laboriously and took refuge under a coil of rope. "The only reason I ship in a privateer," the old fellow continued, "is because Cap'n Boyle fights more like Paul Jones than any man I ever see, an' runs this ship in a strictly man-o'-war style, too. Nothin' goes here that ain't accordin' to regalatations. There's more money in privateerin'," he added with a shrewd wink.

"Well, as I was a-sayin'," he resumed after a



thoughtful chew, "there ain't no midshipmen here, but that's about wot you'll be. You'll do wot the cap'n and the first luff orders ye to do, w'ich'll be about ten thousand different things the fust week."

This observation was delivered with a sage and knowing wink, and a dexterous movement of the tongue that shifted a huge quid from one cheek to the other while the old fellow squinted into the dark corners of the steerage, evidently in the hope that another unwary cockroach might venture into the open. Seeing none, he expectorated aimlessly and resumed his lecture.

"Keep yer eyes skinned and yer ears open to l'arn the ship. Don't sleep on watch an' don't mind a rough word or two."

"Thank you, I'll do my best," said Miles.

"That's the talk, lad," was the answer; "you've got the making of a Jones or a Barney in ye, an' bein' as you're lucky enough ter have some one wot knows the ropes of a real fightin' ship fer a pedagog at the start, I don't doubt but ye'll give a good account o' yerself. I'll be slippin' my anchor now, 'cos I must get on deck. Mind the things I've told you and be alert an' willin'."

With this advice the old fellow disappeared, leaving Miles to stow his kit as shipshape as pos-



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sible in the corner that he was to occupy during the cruise. This done, he hastened to the deck, as the foulness between decks made him long for a deep breath of fresh air.

As he found Captain Boyle too busy to notice him, Miles took a seat on a convenient gunslide where he could watch the scene of hurried preparation for sailing.

Huge, black stevedores were trundling wheelbarrows laden with boxes, crates and barrels up the gangplank and unloading them at the forward hold, where a large number of the *Comet's* crew were busy stowing the goods as fast as they arrived. Over the clatter and banging of the wheelbarrows rose the shouts of the foreman on the dock and the howling orders of Captain Boyle and his officers. Other groups of men were busy in scattered parts of the ship's rigging, reefing the running gear, seizing the chafing mats, or getting the square-sail yards to their caps. Miles was interested in the last point, especially, for he had not realized how completely the "schooner" privateers of the time were equipped to shift from a fore-and-aft rig to square sails.

Tiring of the scene finally, his idle gaze wandered, but his attention was suddenly attracted by an odd personage who was threading his way through



the scattered lumber and junk of the shipyard next to the wharf where the *Comet* lay. The obstructions would have made walking difficult for the ordinary individual, but Miles was interested to notice that the newcomer was not only crippled, but had added to his own awkwardness of locomotion by indulging liberally in spirits. He was following a tortuous route, but seemed to have enough idea of his destination to steer true, in spite of his involuntary tacking, for his objective point, which was evidently the forward gangplank of the *Comet*. Suddenly a loud guffaw rang out, and Miles recognized the voice as that of Herk.

“Hi dar, Pegleg!” yelled the darky, “whar yo’ gwine? Foller yo’ nose and you’ll git some-whar, Timbertoes; but ef yo’ keep a-wabblin’—ha, ha, ha! Whar’s yo’ hat, honey?”

The reference to the hat served to identify the inebriated man and Miles remembered the wooden-legged knight of the bladder tournament. The newcomer, boiling with rage, stumped aboard and, as ill fortune would have it, met his tormentor at the fore hatch. Herk had hurried up to meet him with the idea of making further sport of the drunken man. His intended victim was half-crazed with liquor and now, rendered fully so by the darky’s taunts, was per-



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fectly frantic. As Herk's woolly head appeared above deck the sailor drew his sheath knife and let drive viciously. The blade drove deep into the planking within a scant twelve inches of the negro's head, and Herk sprang up the companionway and made a rush for the knife thrower.

"Herk!"

The sound of Miles's voice brought the darky to a standstill and, as the boy ran up, the two opponents were facing each other with glaring eyes. In the meantime another actor had appeared on the scene. A young officer, who had been standing at the rail giving some orders to a boatswain's mate on the wharf below, jumped between the two belligerents.

"Here, what does this mean?" he demanded sternly.

"Dat peg-legged white trash tried ter—" began Herk.

"Thot black baboon—" started the other, when Miles put in:

"Would you mind my explaining, sir?"

"Not at all, sir; it looks like bad business. A fight among the crew before we get out of port!"

Miles told the story of the bladder fight and the bet that resulted in the loss of the bettor's hat.

"If Oi may interrump' yer, Oi'll shay Oi don't



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let no man that betsh on me do widout his hat. Oi do be afther givin' Gonzalvo me own, by Galway."

The young officer laughed good-naturedly and Miles resumed his explanation.

"I am afraid, Herk, here, was largely to blame," said Miles, "for he was baiting our friend in a very——"

"'Deed, Marse Miles, I didn't mean no harm. I dess wuzn't a-thinkin'. I'll he'p him ter git to bed an' I'll give him de hat I won f'm de Spaniard."

"Get below, both of you, and take care that Captain Boyle doesn't hear of this!" said the officer.

As Herk and Peggy started for the galley, the young officer turned to Miles. "This is Mr. Gadsden, isn't it?" he said, as he held out his hand. "We've been so busy since you came aboard that I haven't had a chance to welcome you. I am Carroll Gilmor, third officer of the *Comet*. I hope I shall be able to help you feel at home with us."

"Thank you, I'm delighted to meet you, Mr. Gilmor," answered Miles, as he returned the handshake warmly. He had been attracted from the first by the fine, manly face of the young sailor and had marked his broad shoulders and lithe figure with admiration.



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“Our friend ‘Pegleg,’ as the negro calls him,” said Gilmor, “is one of the most interesting members of our crew. He came from Galway and was an old neighbor of Captain Boyle’s. For that reason he is a sort of privileged character, though it is lucky for him that the skipper didn’t see him in his present condition. He is our cook and, as he is a ‘liberal feeder,’ he is very popular aboard ship. As I understand, the black fellow is to be his helper. I am glad they seem to be able to settle their ructions so easily.”

“Yes,” answered Miles, “Herk is the best-natured fellow in the world and can’t stay angry five minutes to save his life. It is impossible for him to bear a grudge.”

“Well, ‘Peggy,’ as we call him, is much the same way, and I have an idea that they will become fast friends. But I must leave you, as there’s lots to be done before we weigh anchor.”

He hurried aft and Miles again interested himself in the shifting scenes on the deck below until the last of the stores and ammunition had been put in place, the *Comet’s* owners had given Captain Boyle their final good wishes for a lucky voyage, and the gangplanks were hauled in.

Shortly after, taking the ebb at moonrise, the



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schooner swung gracefully from her moorings, the sails were spread and sheeted home, and her tapering bowsprit pointed for the capes.

A few minutes later the roll of a drum announced supper, and at a call from Boatswain Todd, Miles went below. The steerage smelled no better for the presence of a dozen hulky men, and the steaming dishes of food on the chests which the men had put together for a table.

There were half a dozen men seated on smaller boxes around their improvised table on which stood a "skid," or kettle, containing the "salt horse," a piece of salt beef. This had been boiled in salt so long that the outside was white with salt crystals. Another skid was steaming with pea soup, and was flanked by a pile of sea biscuit or "hard-tack." The remainder of the table furnishings consisted of a tin pail of molasses and a dingy, cracked, vinegar cruet.

"Here you be, Mr. Gadsden," roared Todd, motioning Miles to a seat on the chest beside him. Miles rather half-heartedly obeyed the summons. Accustomed to the comforts of his home, this sudden descent into rough seafaring life took away every vestige of appetite. He made a brave effort, however, to eat some of the thick soup, which was really not bad, but there was a big lump in his throat that



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made it hard swallowing. The others gulped their soup with gusto.

"Nothing fer a seaman like good, salt bull-meat, Mr. Gadsden," observed Todd, reaching for the beef skid and brandishing a long knife.

"Cut fair, messmate!" warned the gunner, fearing that all the fat and tender parts would fall to Todd's blade. "Avast, you swab," retorted the other, cutting off a slice and tossing it to his own tin plate. "Watch, Mr. Gadsden, this is the man-o'-war style o' eatin' it."

Hereupon he cut his section into lumps about the size of an egg, poured vinegar on them, and dusted them heavily with pepper. Then he stowed one compactly in his cheek. By this time, however, Miles felt so miserable that he muttered some excuse and left the ill-smelling steerage for the deck.

As he looked at the low coast line on each side of the bay he wished heartily that he could swim ashore. "I'd run all the way to Annapolis," he added to himself dolefully.

"Mr. Gadsden," came the voice of the boatswain at his elbow, a half hour later, "I'd advise ye to turn in airly and git a few winks while you can. You'll be called for watch before sunrise, 'cos you're billeted on the larboard watch."



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Following the hint, Miles turned down the ladder and rolled into the hammock which Herk had already slung for him at Todd's direction. He had no heart to reply to the chaff that his neighbors gave him. He was disgusted and homesick. The thick air which the little ventilator made barely breathable, the dampness and vermin of the cramped quarters, the oaths, jests and foul talk of some of his companions made the situation almost intolerable. But being thoroughly exhausted he dropped asleep before very long and fell to dreaming of a big, cleanly painted ship, whose quarter-deck he paced, clad in the gold-laced uniform of a captain, while scores of men hurried hither and thither executing his commands.



## CHAPTER III

### RUNNING THE BLOCKADE

**I**N the midst of his imaginary glory Miles felt himself rudely shaken and awoke to find the old boatswain standing over his hammock. "You sar-tain do sleep well," he grinned. "Larboard watch on deck! You'll have to bear a hand about it!" Miles sprang out of his hammock, jumped into his clothes and joined the members of his watch as they tumbled up the forward ladder. His feeling of disgust with his new surroundings was not helped by being awakened at four on a wintry morning.

"This is what I've exchanged for home!" he whispered to himself as he left his hammock. But when he reached the deck, pulling on his pea-jacket as he went, the fresh air that came across the dancing waters of the bay filled his lungs and his spirits rose with the brightness of the day. He remembered with some comfort the assurances of Captain Barney that the life of a privateersman was likely to be



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crowded with opportunities for heroic deeds, and for the first time he felt that he was ready to take up with zest whatever the duties of his new life might put before him.

The deck was aswarm with men. As the custom was, the members of the crew were divided into two watches, which were alternately on duty every four hours, save for the "dog watch" in the afternoon, which was only two. The *Comet* carried a crew of one hundred and twenty and half that number was enough to manage the sail of six vessels of the size of the *Comet*. Here and there a group was ordered by the second officers to this duty or that and Miles hoped that he, as a greenhorn, might be overlooked in the crowd until he understood things better.

The *Comet* had been footing it rather slowly during the night, for the wind was light, and he found they were now only opposite the mouth of the Patuxent. But, as the east whitened, a sudden puff came from the northwest and the sails flapped.

"Bear a hand there! Can ye furl a sail?" shouted a voice back of him. He turned and saw Captain Boyle. "No passengers on this ship!" he growled.

Miles jumped to respond to the order implied, for he must show his captain that he was willing and



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efficient. He knew that Captain Barney had commended him highly to the skipper, and he turned to with a will, for the sake of his indorser, as well as to prove himself no lubber in the eyes of his commander.

The booms swung creaking, the extra sail was stowed in a moment, and before the freshening breeze the *Comet* raced down the bay.

As Miles looked over the incidents of the morning the only thing that seemed to distinguish him from the common sailor was that he was not called upon to join in the morning task of swabbing down the decks. That was some comfort. Remembering what Todd had told him, he walked aft and took a position by a gun on the lee side of the quarter-deck, where he awaited orders. For an hour he was utterly ignored by his commander, who blustered back and forth, growling at the indications of fair weather.

Suddenly he shouted: "Gadsden!"

"Here, sir!"

"Answer 'Aye, aye, sir!'"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Tell Todd to muster all hands!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

Miles ran forward to execute the order.



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“All hands ahoy!” rang through the ship, and the men of the “watch below” turned up on deck to join the rest.

In a few minutes they were assembled on the quarter-deck, facing their captain.

“Men,” he began, “we are aboard this ship to help our country by destroying the enemy’s commerce. The work is risky, but if I’ve shipped a coward, I’ll see that he won’t ever reach home. If there’s a shirk aboard, I’ll make him sweat like a slave; but if you’ll all bear a hand like true seamen, there’s prize money and fame for every man jack on board.”

At this the men shouted “Huzza!” and Boyle, evidently pleased with the looks of his men, with this short but characteristic speech turned them over to the first officer and went below to his cabin.

Miles was not to see his first day aboard ship pass without incident. They were nearing Hampton Roads, and the *Comet* had been overhauling every southbound vessel sighted, to the old boatswain’s manifest delight. Todd had been pointing out to Miles the *Comet’s* sailing qualities when he suddenly broke off with, “That there schooner wants to hail. Look, see her!” The little vessel swung off on her star-board tack, apparently intending to cross the bows



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of the *Comet*. As he looked, Miles noticed a signal flag fluttering at her foretop. In another moment, Captain Boyle, with a growl, ordered the ship thrown up into the wind and the two vessels lay together.

"Ahoy, there, what do ye want?" bellowed Boyle.

"To warn ye, my hearty," sang out the schooner's captain. "There's three frigates and a razee waitin' to swaller ye at the Capes. We ain't so crazy 'bout gittin' to Savannah as we wuz!" And he pointed to a hole made by a cannon shot in his mainsail.

"Thankee kindly," replied Boyle with a laugh, "but this craft has met those gentry before."

The helm swung over, and, while the crews chaffed each other, the *Comet* parted from the friendly stranger. But instead of keeping directly to the capes, Boyle changed his course, so that by the middle of the afternoon his anchor chains were rattling through the hawse holes off the mouth of the Elizabeth River.

On the following morning, when Miles had expected to be well at sea, he was sent with a boat party to Norfolk, on what he regarded as the lubberly task of buying fresh provisions for the captain's table.



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This delay at Hampton Roads struck him as a very tame ending to their expedition, but he made good use of it by taking frequent meals at the Norfolk tavern and by buying fresh meat for his own mess. As one dull day followed another, he began to wonder if Boyle really deserved his name for daring. Probably the blockading ships would stay indefinitely and the *Comet* would have to crawl back to Baltimore like the little schooner they had met.

"Don't ye worry, my sonniwax," laughed Todd, to whom Miles had grumbled. "The old man's waiting for a black night and a blow. You'll get all you want, sure's my name's Bill Todd."

By the fifth day the "black night and the blow" arrived with a vengeance. Seeing the signs of the storm in the morning sky, Captain Boyle canceled all permissions for liberty ashore and began to make everything snug for sea. By sundown, when leaden clouds rushed overhead and other craft were scudding through white caps to make the friendly shelter of the Roads, the *Comet's* capstan was whirling around and in a few minutes she pointed seaward.

It was a northeast gale, with spats of icy rain. Boyle, suiting his rig to the wind, which was almost dead astern as the *Comet* ran for the capes, sent up square yards on fore and main, carrying a close-



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reefed topsail, and foresail on the foremast, and a close-reefed topsail on the main; altogether a heavy spread of canvas for the rate the wind was blowing, but the men were out on the yards ready for instant shortening of sail whenever Boyle's instinct told him that it was necessary.

Miles was ordered up to the foretop to assist the lookout, as soon as the *Comet* swung out from Old Point into the bay. By this time the rain was already turning to sleet; and Miles found a cold night's work ahead of him. Accordingly, he donned his heaviest clothes, with a pea-jacket on top, tied on a soft felt hat and started up the icy shrouds to his station on the foretop. The "top" on the *Comet's* mast was a platform about six feet square where the topmast joined the foremast. Miles had been up there but once before, and then while the *Comet* lay at anchor. It was a very different thing to climb up now in pitch darkness. Not a lantern gleamed, as Boyle did not want to betray the *Comet* to the enemy. With the ship tearing ahead at the speed of a racing yacht, lurching and swaying with the beat of the waves, Miles clung tightly to the shrouds and stepped carefully up the icy ratlines, so carefully, indeed, that the first lieutenant shouted angrily to him to "Bear a hand and lay aloft!"



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When he finally climbed through the "lubber hole" upon the top, he found a sailor who had been ordered there with him, ready to give him a helping hand. Once upon that little platform, Miles felt as if nothing could ever tempt him to let go the stay to which he clung, half lying on his stomach, facing forward. When Miles looked down over the edge of the top he could hardly see the deck below. Everything seemed swallowed up in darkness and tempest except the little top on which he and the sailor were stationed, and that seemed to be swinging between a black sky above and a roaring sea below.

The cold rain was now turning to colder flakes of snow that pasted thickly over the icy rigging and enveloped the two cold figures on the lookout in the foretop. The snow drove straight into Miles's face, and every now and then a dash of salt spray from the bows wet his lips. The wind suddenly shifted almost due east; the yards swung to meet the shift of wind, and the *Comet* heeled over under the press of canvas till the lee rail was awash. At that angle Miles could stay on his perch only by bracing his feet against the three-inch rail that ran around the edge of the top. With one arm he clung to the mast while his other hand, numb with cold, was clenched to the stay. Miles was no mollycoddle, but his heart



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was in his mouth. The sharp angle of the foretop on which he lay, the tremendous sway and lurch of the mast as the ship leaped from one wave to another, tearing through the tempest into the thick darkness, made an experience that called for all his nerve. He shuddered as he gazed below and imagined what would happen if an icy heel slipped or numb fingers relaxed.

The seaman beside him noticed the shudder and the tightened grip on the shrouds, for he bawled into Miles's ear, "It's a raw night, sure's my name's Tubbs. What d'ye think the owners would say if they saw what the old man's doin' to-night?" Then he chuckled as comfortably as if he were warming his feet on his home hearthstone.

Miles caught the other's spirit and began to feel the exhilaration of the adventure. He grinned as he thought of the sleek, pompous merchants who had come to the wharf to see the *Comet* sail, especially one whom he had overheard say to Captain Boyle, "Do be prudent, sir, pray remember not to take undue risks!"

Suddenly, Miles's neighbor nudged him and pointed ahead. By screwing up his eye against the arrows of sleet and snow, the lad saw swaying lights—the lanterns of the blockading fleet—and his heart



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jumped at the first glimpse of the enemy. But there was little trimming of sail, for the *Comet* was plunging toward what looked like a wide gap between two vessels.

Suddenly, Miles thought he saw a shape looming ahead, and he yelled to his neighbor. At that instant the boatswain's whistle shrilled, the yards creaked around, the ship righted on even keel and then fell off on the other tack just in time to avoid a huge ship directly in her path. The latter at once fired two rockets that were answered by two others on the port bow of the privateer, which was now tearing ahead on her starboard tack. In a few minutes Todd's whistle piped again, and the ship swung off on her other tack within half pistol shot of a British frigate.

The rockets had done their work. Miles heard sharp words of command, then a deafening roar. His eyes and nostrils were stung with sulphurous smoke, the foretop mast above his head cracked and splintered, and the sailor Tubbs gasped an oath as he sank limply at Miles's feet. Miles saw that the man had been stunned by the concussion, for he had been leaning against the heel of the mast, and was in great danger of falling off the top. With a few turns with the bight of a rope Miles lashed him



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to the mast. Then as he looked up he could see that the topmast had been struck by a shot and was straining dangerously under the pressure of sail.

For a moment his heart stood still. Here he was, a green hand, in a crisis that called for immediate action, with the prostrate body of a sailor clogging his foothold. Judging that his first duty was to report the trouble to the officers below, he hailed the deck, but his voice was drowned by the howling of the storm and the thunder of the Englishman's second broadside not far astern. Above his head the foremast bent like a bow, threatening at any minute to crash to the deck.

"I've got to get that yard lowered somehow," he said to himself as he clung to his swaying perch. The fore-topsail, he knew, was raised and lowered by halyards on port and starboard sides of the mast, and in the darkness he could barely make them out as they stood within reach.

He had no knife on his own person, but he knew that the sailor had one in a lanyard sheath. Holding on tightly and bracing his feet, he reached with his disengaged hand under the seaman's jacket. He felt the knife, but, to his dismay, his fingers could not draw it out on account of his mitten. Another



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moment and he had drawn the mitten off with his teeth, and it flew out astern before the wind. After a vigorous slap to bring back the blood to the stiff fingers he reached back again and drew out the knife. Then, flattening himself again on the top so he could use both hands, he opened the blade with difficulty and, clutching the knife in his teeth, scrambled back to a standing position. Now came the hardest part. Leaning out, and clutching with one hand to a stay, he patiently sawed through the ropes, letting the spar drop "by the run." To Miles's relief, when the halyards were out, the huge spar did not crash down the cap—as he had feared it would—for the strong outward pressure of the sail let it down gently till it seesawed on the cap. But, in the process, the sail slatted dangerously against Miles with its rain-sodden folds like a huge and horrible bird that was determined to beat the lad from its nest with giant wings. More than once he came perilously near being dashed to the deck.

With the spar lowered, the topmast straightened up, relieved of the strain. Miles, seeing that he could do nothing toward stowing the sail single-handed, turned his efforts to lashing the disabled seaman more firmly. By this time the violent exertion had brought the blood to the boy's numb fingers and he



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began to feel a new courage and self-confidence as he labored at his dizzy work.

Suddenly he caught his name shouted up from the captain's speaking trumpet. "Gadsden! lay down from aloft!" The unauthorized lowering of the fore-topsail yard had quickly attracted attention, especially as the *Comet* was by this time racing off on an easy tack out of gunshot. Miles hurried down and to Captain Boyle's stern query explained as best he could in a few words what had happened, whereupon Boyle sent up his carpenter to investigate the damage, and ordered three seamen to bring down the unconscious man.

"Fore-topmast busted by a solid shot, sir," reported the carpenter as he regained the deck.

"A broth of a boy ye are, Gadsden," cried Boyle warmly; "go below and turn in. Ye've had enough rough work for a while!"

Tired as he was, the excitement of the night kept Miles staring at the creaking timbers over his hammock for more than an hour. He began to realize that it was only the lucky roll of the British ship that sent her broadside high and saved the *Comet* from being blown out of water. But, best of all, he had won a hearty word from his commander, and he dropped off to sleep as happy as he was tired.



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During the night an occasional booming of the Englishman's bow chasers showed that the frigate still held on in chase; but the *Comet* was probably the swiftest of all the fast clippers that flew the stars and stripes; and when Miles reported for duty the following morning, a strict search with the glasses failed to discover even a masthead over the hills of foam.



## CHAPTER IV

### SEAMANSHIP AND SWORD PLAY

**B**EFORE breakfast the following morning Todd sought out Miles, and told him that he was to mess with the officers, by order of Captain Boyle. This was good news to the lad, for he felt that it put him on a better footing. Even though he had no title in the ship's company, he was now rated with the officers. At breakfast call he was quick to report to his new mess room, where before that day he had never set foot. He found a small, rectangular cabin, set amidships, lighted by a skylight overhead, and occupied chiefly by a huge mahogany table that shone like a ripe cherry. Around this were set swivel chairs, for which there was barely room against the sides of the cabin. At the head of the table, nearest the door, sat already the first officer, who greeted him with a curt but cheery nod. At the other end sat Gilmor, who, on seeing



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Miles, called out: "Here you are!" and pointed to the seat he was to occupy.

"What a splendid table!" cried Miles, after he had squirmed into his seat.

"Isn't it?" laughed Gilmor. "That used to belong to a British bark a year ago, but it's changed hands. We find your big nigger, Herk, just the man for putting a shine on it."

Just then the others came in, each with a pleasant word for their new messmate. One of the most interesting of his new companions he soon discovered was Pierre Lusson, the second officer. In the first place, he was of striking build, of average height, but weighing well over two hundred pounds, his breadth of shoulder and depth of chest were fully double those of the ordinary man, so that when he entered, as Miles noticed, the burly Frenchman swung sideways so as not to scrape the door facings. In spite of his thickset appearance, it was easy to see that he had no waste fat on his big bones. When he spoke, it was with a deep resonant tone. "Just the voice for orders in a storm," reflected Miles. The Frenchman's winning feature, however, was his twinkling brown eye, that suggested a world of good nature.

"*Ma foi!*" cried Lusson, as he squeezed into



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his chair at the table, "I believe I could eat a horse, wiz ze hoof and ze hide."

"Excuse me for flattering you," answered the "first luff," Bradford, "but I am sure you could do it. I begin to suspect that I know where my old pair of boots went."

"The first luff is about right!" said Gilmor in an aside to Miles. "Pierre is certainly hateful after his rations!"

Miles took a furtive survey of the little first lieutenant, whose explosive temper almost everybody on ship held in dread. He was slight and dark, with small, carefully curled side whiskers in the fashion of the day; and made an amusing contrast with the big blond Lusson, who sat on his right. In fact, Lusson was the only man except Boyle that dared to joke at Bradford's expense, for even the obstreperous Gilmor, who occasionally joked with Boyle, never ventured to bandy repartee with Bradford.

When Herk's grinning teeth showed through the steam of a big pan of stewed oysters in the doorway there was a shout of applause, and when a moment later this dish was flanked by a platter of roasted potatoes, the chorus of approval made Herk feel himself to be the hero of the hour. He hurried out



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to report to Peggy, his superior officer, with all his teeth on dress parade. Lusson's eyes glistened as the dishes arrived.

"Our Peggy, he ees not a peench-gut," the big fellow remarked approvingly, and when he fell to, the way potatoes, bacon, and oysters disappeared was amazing. Gilmor intercepted one of Miles's surprised glances at the rapidly growing pile of potato skins at the side of Lusson's plate and burst into a hearty laugh.

"What did I tell you, Gadsden!" he cried. "He creates havoc at a mess table, doesn't he? The potatoes he can do to death in one engagement would keep a man-of-war's crew from the scurvy for a whole cruise. Why, the oyster bottoms of Chesapeake Bay would hardly afford him a day's rations!"

One of Lusson's cheeks was distended, but he managed to grin cheerfully with the opposite corner of his mouth. He swallowed, smacked his lips, and with an oyster held in peril near its grave, said: "Say on, *mon ami*. *Ventre affame n'a pas point d'oreilles!*"

"Good, Pierre, good!" laughed Gilmor.

"What did he say?" asked Miles.

"He says, 'a starved belly has no ears,' and I



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reckon if that is so, Pierre's stomach is stone deaf."

Lusson's eyes twinkled. However, being too busy with his provender to reply, he continued to "pass supplies down his hatchway," as Gilmor put it, with unabated zeal.

Next to Lusson sat the surgeon, Dr. Banks, a quiet, elderly man. He wore large, silver-rimmed spectacles, an ill-fitting wig, and affected a gruff manner in order to maintain his dignity among his younger messmates; but later Miles found him to be as kind at heart as any one on board.

Breakfast over, Miles reported on deck, and at the stroke of eight bells went on watch. Borrowing Gilmor's glass he went aloft to the foretop, the scene of the previous night's adventure, where he was ordered as lookout. As he circled the horizon in an effort to sight a hostile sail, Lusson appeared on deck. With a knowing wink at Todd, who was busy near by, he called: "On ze lookout for game, Gadsden?"

"Aye, but there's not a sail in sight," said Miles disgustedly.

"Well, we cannot promees a fight or a foot race every day. I should sink last night's rencontre would have satisfied you for a leetle while!"



## SEAMANSHIP AND SWORD PLAY

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“He’s a blood-thirsty youngster, that one,” remarked Todd, as he crossed the deck for a spit to leeward, “but, blast my magazine, he’ll get his bellyful of bloody business, or my name’s not Bill Todd. Eh, Peggy?”

This last was directed to the cook, who was stumping by. “I do be t’inkin’, by Galway,” said Peggy, as he cocked one eye aloft, “that I could tell yez the name of a foine-lookin’ young gintleman that will turn sick at the stoomick whiniver he hears ‘sail ho’ if he sarves wid Cap’n Tummas Boyle of Galway manny weeks. If iver there was a man spoilin’ fer a good loively ruction, ’tis that same son of the sod, by Galway!”

Unconscious of the fun at his expense, Miles kept his station at the foretop, and earnestly scanned the waste of waters on every side. The happenings of the night before had whetted his appetite for adventure, and a feeling of exultation and self-sufficiency thrilled him as he reflected that he had successfully stood the test of being under fire. He was yet to learn that mere absence of fear when under the excitement of stirring incidents is not everything. For the time, though, he was perfectly happy, and his situation was one well calculated to make him so. The day was clear and crisp with a fresh breeze that



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sent the *Comet* speeding southward under a full spread of canvas. Though the weather had been wintry enough when the privateer cleared the capes, to-day a balminess in the air showed the influence of the Gulf Stream, becoming more and more marked as the schooner held her course toward the Caribbean.

It did not take long, however, for the self-satisfied feeling of the day after running the blockade to give way to mortification at his own ignorance. There seemed to be so little that he knew how to do aboard ship. At home, preparing for his expected commission in the navy, he had studied navigation, and knew something about the theory of it, but, naturally, on the *Comet* he had nothing of that to do. It was the details of practical seamanship that he needed to know, and that he found he did not know at all.

First of all, he had to learn the discipline and organization of the ship. As Todd had said, Captain Boyle ran his ship as if it were a smart man-of-war, and woe to the man who forgot that fact for an instant. For example, Miles heard a seaman sharply lectured for referring to the "galley" as the "caboose," which is the merchantman's name for the ship's kitchen.



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In the first place, the entire crew and most of the officers were divided into the two watches, "starboard and larboard," each of which was on duty four hours at a time. The seamen were also rated in classes known as the "after guard," "waisters," "fore-castle men," and "top men," the last being the very pick of the crew, the next best being the "after guard," and the green, or untested, men were the "waisters," that is, those whose stations were amidships.

Next, there were several points of man-of-war etiquette that Miles had to learn. First, on ascending to the quarter-deck from below, he had to "salute the deck," and after the first blowing-up he got from Captain Boyle he never forgot the ceremony. He learned, too, that no one, not even an officer, is allowed to sit on the quarter-deck, much less indulge in loud conversation or laughter. Lieutenant Bradford taught him that point with great fluency of language. That very day he saw some one else catch it from the fiery first luff. It was one of the green hands who innocently walked aft on the weather side of the deck, which was sacred to the officers, instead of crossing over to leeward.

In fact, there seemed to be so much to learn all at once that he felt very much bewildered, and ran



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from Gilmor to Todd, trying to get "pointed fair," as the latter put it. But the etiquette of the ship was only the beginning of what he had to learn. One morning, about a week after leaving the capes, Miles, being off duty, came upon Bill Todd, who, also being off duty, was cutting with infinite care a slice of his beloved weed.

"When are you going to spin me that yarn about how you lost that ear?" asked Miles. "Now's a good chance."

"Wall," deliberated the boatswain, "I'm all right now for the yarn, if you'll give me your solerm affidavit that what I tell you is atween you and me and the dog-vane. Is it a bargain?"

"Cross my heart and body, by the Beard of the Prophet, and 'pon honor, besides," agreed Miles, laughing. "Spin the yarn."

"Wall," deliberated the old fellow, "when me an' Paul Jones was— Why, blast my magazine, lad, here I am spinnin' a yarn when Cap'n Boyle just give me sailin' orders about you!" And he looked up with such a comical air of pretended surprise at his own absent-mindedness that Miles burst out laughing.

"Laughin', are ye? Better stow that, Mr. Gadsden. 'Scuse me, but you act like your jibs is



bowsed out taut!" rebuked the old Triton, with a frown and a sharp snap of his clasp knife. "Cap'n Boyle says to me, no later than seven bells: 'Go bat some sea sense in that young lubber's head if you can'—'scuse me, but them's his very words—and you'll obey the cap'n's orders, Mr. Gadsden."

"Aye, aye," replied Miles soberly, seeing that the old man resented being laughed at.

"Very good. Here's a fair piece of rope yarn. Now, sir, show me a rollin' half hitch."

"Why, I know a clove hitch, and two half hitches on a bight, but——"

"Ho, ho!" roared Todd. "Is that your sea kit? A clove hitch, and two half hitches on a bight!" The old tar shouted with derision at such abysmal ignorance. "Here, younker, peel your eyes, and do it over after me. Don't let me have to larn ye again."

Miles had barely learned the two half hitches with the extra turn, which constituted the "rollin' half hitch," when two young sailors came forward from the main hatch.

"Hold hard a bit, my boy. Here comes Jenkins and Potts with a lot of junk I told them to make up into swabs." The old man turned toward the two seamen.



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“ Dump that junk by the combings, and unlay it into yarns. Take some good strands and make some grommets. Soon as ye get that done, take the twist and lay well out an’ middle ’em in the grommets, and keep on fillin’ up close to the grommets; clap on a good seizin’ of spun-yarn, and then snake it. Now, don’t you young spit-to-wind’ards cut off the ends of the strands! Seize ’em in with the rest of the swab! ”

This was practically all Greek to Miles, and for the moment diverted his thoughts from the mysterious story connected with Todd’s damaged ear.

“ What does all that mean, Todd? ” he asked.

“ Well, if you step up here by these two green-horns, I’ll show ye,” was the answer. “ They don’t know much more about it than you do, so it’s a good chance to larn ye somethin’ about knots, splices, hitches, and etcetery.”

Miles was interested at once, but as they walked down the deck toward the two sailors, he remembered the damaged ear story, and said:

“ Todd, we’re forgetting about that ear.”

“ W’ich ear? ” asked Todd innocently. “ Oh, yes,” as if he suddenly recollected a long forgotten topic, “ I’ll tell ye somethin’ about that flapper when



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I git a chance to leave these lubbers here what's tryin' to make swabs."

The two men looked up from their work, and grinned cheerfully at Todd, who thereupon concluded his remarks to Miles with the statement that the "two burgoo-swillin' spit-to-wind'ards" before him were the "thickest-headed mullets that ever signed articles aboard ship." The pair evidently understood the boatswain's character, for when he rolled to the lee rail and spurted viciously, one of them jerked a thumb at the old man, and said in a hoarse whisper: "Thar she blows!" while the other winked one of a pair of twinkling eyes at Miles.

"Now," said Todd, returning with a fresh lump in his cheek, "you two fetch this here junk up in shootin' distance o' that larboard hawse pipe, and I'll start this young gentleman on his fust lesson in handlin' knots and hitches. I must have a outlet to my feelin's or I can't do no work to speak on," he continued, as he reached the spot indicated, and spurt! went the brown stream through the hawse hole, which, on account of the smooth sea, had been left open for the convenience of the deck swabbers that morning.

Soon Miles was deep in the intricacies of his rope yarn, his first day's lesson dealing with "timber



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hitches," "sheepshanks," "bowline knots," and "carrick bends." When the sailors had finished their swabs, Todd took the rope from Miles and told him to watch the making of a "bowline on a bight," which all three of the greenhorns, he observed, needed to learn right away.

"Take a bight o' the rope in your right hand—*right* hand, I said, Jenkins, you mullet-headed, bum-boat blockhead—and the standin' part in your left; throw a cuckold's neck over the bight with the standin' parts, and then haul enough on the bight up through the cuckold's neck to go under and over all parts; now jam all tight, and ye got her right as a trivet!"

Miles followed the process with strict attention, learning nothing at all from the instructions, but a good deal from what he saw; and by hard work was soon able to do it himself without help. By this time the bells rang for change of watch, and Todd announced that "school had let out." Thereafter, every day Miles was rounded up by the boatswain for his lessons in the handling of ropes, and an exacting teacher the old fellow proved. Finally, when the boy had gone through the mysterious list of "Flemish eyes," "salvagee straps," "knittles," "black-wall hitches," and the like, had learned to



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splice neatly and lay a "Matthew Walker," Todd took his pupil to the rigging.

Here Miles found great difficulty in remembering the names of the myriads of ropes and where they were belayed. He began to realize what the expression means, "to learn the ropes." Without saying anything to Todd, he began by writing in pencil on the buff paint work around the belaying pins the name of each rope to help him remember; but he had not gone very far before Bradford caught him at it, and the peppery little officer exploded with so much fury at such lubberly practices that Miles had to get along as best he could without.

Finally, he took to making drawings of the riggings of the various spars with the name of every rope and sail, and by diligent study made enough progress to get a grudging compliment even from the old boatswain himself.

In after days, however, as he looked back over his life aboard the *Comet*, he felt that he owed about as much to Lusson as to Todd; for the Frenchman taught him the use of the sword as few men could have done.

Before coming to America, Lusson had been one of the best swordsmen in the French service. When almost a boy, while stationed at the navy yard



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at l'Orient, he had welcomed the opportunity to join Paul Jones at the time the latter called for volunteers to fill out the complement of the *Bon Homme Richard*. During the war he met Todd, and when there was a promise of another war between America and Great Britain, the Yankee had taken an early opportunity to write, urging his old comrade in arms to join the men of the states in their second war with Great Britain. The letter found Lusson nominally a sergeant of marines at Brest, but in reality a fencing master, whose services were in great demand among the officers of the French navy. The call from across the water came fortunately, as he told Miles, within thirty days of the end of his enlistment; and, as he was an ardent republican and out of sympathy with Bonaparte's empire, the day of his discharge found him on the way to Havre to board a Baltimore clipper. Todd's indorsement had satisfied Boyle, and as the latter was in need of a man to fill the second officer's berth, Lusson was promptly signed.

At Bradford's suggestion, Miles asked the big Frenchman to teach him sword play; and found that Lusson was not only willing to teach him, but delighted to have a pupil. Gilmor, too, became interested at once, and asked leave to join the class.



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Lusson was surprised to find that Miles was no novice either with the rapier or with the broadsword, and complimented the boy in a way that brought a flush of pleasure to his cheeks.

"He ees not ze novice I t'ought he was, Meestaire Gilmor. Already he has handled ze blade!"

"I envy you, Gadsden. That is a good deal for him to say," said Gilmor. "I find him very chary of praise in my case."

"Ah, zat ees different! You have had ze experience; but because he ees new to ze warfare, I did not sink of heem as a swordsman."

Miles explained that his tutor at home had insisted on an hour's work each day with the foils as part of the curriculum of a future naval officer. This brought forth the statement from Lusson that it was a pity more were not of the same way of thinking, followed by a dissertation on the value of an intimate knowledge of the "gentleman's weapon" and its superiority over the pistol, which was then in favor as a dueling weapon. Miles was so much impressed that when he resumed the work with the foils it was with added respect for the weapon.

In a bout with Gilmor, Miles came off so well that when his turn came to face the Frenchman he



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felt confident that he could show his teacher a thing or two about rapid sword play. As he pranced before Lusson, Miles noticed a look of astonishment, and was encouraged to make a still more sensational display by attempting some lively offensive work. As he capered about the big fellow, the latter gave way and seemed to be carefully guarding. Miles side-stepped, drew back from a thrust that fell short, and then lunged for a stroke that he thought was to reach home. In his excitement he crowded the interested Gilmor backward over a coil of rope. This he saw out of the corner of his eye just as Lusson, in the most nonchalant manner, seemed to twist his own weapon about Miles's blade. Instantly, the boy felt his wrist wrenched, and saw his opponent carelessly toss the foil down the companionway. To Gilmor the chagrin on Miles's face was so irresistibly ludicrous, that he screamed with laughter, but Lusson said, with only a slight smile:

"Ha, zat was a lively leetle passahge, was eet not?"

"Well—ah—how on earth did you do it?" gasped Miles.

"That's what I'd like to know," said Gilmor, as he scrambled to his feet, convulsed with merriment.

"I turned turtle, and when I righted myself, Miles's



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sword was gone. Why didn't you wait 'til I got my bearings? "

" Find ze sword, Gilmor, and I shall show you how eet was did—*done*, I mean."

" Bless my soul, you'll have to furnish me with a chart and point me fair. Last I saw of it, it was sailing toward the futtock shrouds."

Miles didn't relish the fun at his expense, but joined in the laugh as Bill Todd came on deck, asking innocently:

" Any of you gentlemen lose a small sword with a bullet on the end of it? I seen a stray one a while ago."

" Where away, bos'n? " asked Gilmor.

" Three points off the port corner of the last step of that there companionway," was the answer, and Todd cleared the lee taffrail with an unctuous spurt.

Miles was before Gilmor in recovering his sword, and returned rather shamefacedly. As the fencers faced each other again, Lusson said:

" Now, watch me; eet ees queeck, so! " and a second after the meeting of the blades Miles was disarmed, his weapon sailing this time toward Todd, who ducked, and said:

" Rainin' swords again! I tell ye, Mr. Gadsden, if you could feed 'em to him fast enough, he



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could keep a string of 'em up in the air all the time."

Though Miles did not appreciate it at the time, the part of the day's lesson that was most valuable to him was the discovery that, after all, he knew very little about the art of fencing. For a time there was danger of a loss of self-confidence on the boy's part, but Lusson knew that with a personality like Miles's, overconfidence was more to be guarded against. With his daily instruction and occasional encouragement, Miles's nerve soon came back, and many hours were pleasantly and profitably spent as the *Comet* was swinging away toward the tropics.



## CHAPTER V

### SIGHTING THE ENEMY

**A**VOIDING the Windward Passage because of the British squadron that used Kingston as a base, Boyle aimed to work into the path of the merchantmen trading between the ports of England and the British possessions in South America.

Though Miles's own father was a privateersman, he himself entertained rather supercilious feelings toward the profession, influenced by the known attitude of naval officers. This feeling he voiced one day as he and Gilmor stood leaning on the taffrail watching a school of porpoises.

"Do you consider this scouring the seas for peaceful little traders real warfare, Gilmor?" Miles asked.

The young officer's face took on a displeased expression, and for a moment he said nothing. "I guess Cap'n Boyle has just as much stomach for a fight as you, Gadsden. You haven't developed



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enough patience for a seaman. Here comes Todd; ask him."

"Oh, I know what he will say," answered Miles, "but it seems to me that this is purely a commercial venture, as if the skipper and the rest of us only welcomed war because it means prize money, and not because we want to avenge the wrongs of our impressed sailors."

"Now, lookee, my boy—if you'll excuse me for bein' familiar?" replied the boatswain, "but have you ever been impressed?"

"Of course not."

"Well, now, you don't see me a-makin' no blubberin's over my revenge, do ye? Look at this back!" Suiting the action to the word, old Todd wrenched his shirt tail free of his belt and pulled it up around his shoulders. Miles stared with horror at the sight presented. Crisscrossed from side to side was a latticework of purple scars.

"That's what I've got to remember forced service under a dirty English brute. Don't you think I want to pay 'em back, and don't you think I know the kind of a skipper to ship with to do it? I remember on the *Richard* Cap'n Jones——"

"Sail ho!" came a voice from the foretop.

"Where away?" called Bradford.



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"Dead ahead, sir," was the answer, and all eyes scanned the surface of the waters.

"Aye, there's the tip of a topmast," said Todd a moment later.

Miles was sent to inform Captain Boyle, who was in his cabin, and the skipper ran up the ladder steps like a boy.

After inspecting the stranger through his glass, he said disgustedly, "It's only a little two-masted schooner. If she flies the 'blood and guts of old England,' though, we'll have to take her into camp."

Within the hour the *Comet* had overhauled her quarry, a small schooner but heavily cargoed. Boyle had not even gone through the formality of firing across her bows, but simply ran alongside, shortened sail and called for her surrender. The schooner's captain hastily complied, and sent a boat aboard with the information that his vessel was the *Dormouse*, sixty days from Plymouth, with a cargo of hardware and calicoes.

In a few minutes arrangements were made for a prize crew and a transference of the prisoners to the *Comet*. Out of the crew of eight, three were left on the *Dormouse*, and the rest transferred to the privateer.

"Here, Hoffman!" called Boyle to a tall young



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sailor who stood leaning on the bulwarks, "you'll do. Pick three men and jump aboard."

"Aye, aye, sir!" and Hoffman turned to a group at the mainmast, "Johnson, Tubbs and—and Stewart."

"Aw, hell! Skip me, Jack. I don't want to go back when I ain't seen no fightin'," expostulated the last selection.

"You swab," replied Hoffman, "do you think *I* want to go?"

"Lively there!" roared Boyle, and the four men dived below, reappearing in a few moments with their kits. Five minutes later, the little prize, with the Stars and Stripes at her masthead, keeled over before the wind and headed northwest, while the crew of the *Comet* sent a parting cheer.

Then, as the *Comet* herself swung away in the opposite direction, Miles sauntered aft to where Gilmor was listening to one of the cook's yarns. Peggy turned as Miles came up.

"Well, by Galway, at last ye've seen a rale capture, Mr. Gadsden."

"Yes, such as it was," said Miles disgustedly. "I reckon we'll be picking up an orange crate next! It just shows the difference between privateering and the navy."



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“What!” shouted a voice at his shoulder. “The navy? Why, damme, boy, do ye sneer at a privateersman’s work?”

Recognizing Bradford’s voice, Miles turned, greatly taken aback at having been overheard by the “first luff,” and said hesitatingly, “Why, I—you know, I mean on a man-of-war——”

“Man-of-war—pah!” snorted Bradford in a high temper. “What do you know about a man-of-war? I warrant, ye’ll see the sand on the deck just as soon and a deal sight oftener aboard the *Comet* than you would on a lumberin’ seventy-four. An’ I’ll tell you furthermore, there’s no craft cutting water to-day that can show this good little ship a clean pair of heels!”

“I didn’t mean——”

“Never mind what you didn’t mean—it’s what you did mean that counts. You meant that the work of a privateer counted for naught in this war. Does it mean nothing that a nation’s commerce be destroyed, that her supplies for her armies be turned away to her enemy? And you’ll find a navy man just as keen for his prize money as we are. Bah! You may have the making of a navy dandy, but I’ve a premonition that the sprinkling of the sand on the deck will set your teeth to chattering!”



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"I'm not a coward!" retorted Miles indignantly, as the outburst ended.

"Brave men do but little foolish talking, boy," was the answer the first lieutenant flung back over his shoulder as he stalked to the cabin ladder.

Peggy had retreated to a position of safety behind the mizzenmast, but Gilmor, seeing Miles struggling between anger and humiliation, stepped up and, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder, said:

"Don't feel so keenly over it, Miles. His squalls blow over quickly. He's hot-tempered, but he can't bear ill-will an hour."

"I know, Gilmor," was the answer, "but the worst is that I was wrong."

"Said like a man—that's the right spirit, anyhow. Come, let's get in the shade of the mains'l; this equator weather is too much for my constitution. By the way, it occurred to me to ask you about your sister? Isn't Miss Deborah Gadsden, of Annapolis, your sister? I thought so; well, I met her at an Assembly in Philadelphia about two years ago, and they told me that she would probably marry an English nobleman. She was then one of the most charming young ladies I ever saw and I hoped the rumor was not true, if you don't mind my saying so."

"The rumor wasn't true in more senses than



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one," replied Miles, grateful for the change of subject. "He turned out to be an absolute impostor, when father took the trouble to look up his antecedents, and it didn't take long for the old gentleman to boot him off our front steps, I can tell you."

"What was he?"

"I never saw him—we never even learned his real name. I was away at school in Baltimore while his courtship was going on, but father discovered that he was a junior lieutenant of the British navy who had been suspended several months for misconduct. Sister never liked him, I'm glad to say, but the idea of a real lord in Annapolis society made a sensation, they tell me. My! I wish I had a chance at him!"

"Well, let's hope we run across him in this war and finish the licking he deserves," laughed Gilmor. "I'll be glad to help you, Miles. Some one told me, too, that your father had been captured early in the war. I hope that rumor is as false as the other?"

"I wish it were," said Miles ruefully. "But I'm hoping by this time he's been exchanged."

"Yes, let's hope so, anyhow!" answered Gilmor cheerily, and went on watch in response to the clang of the ship's bell.

Miles knew before long that Bradford had re-



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ported his remarks on privateering to the skipper, for Boyle summoned the boy to his cabin and had a little talk with him that made his ears burn with mortification. During the days that immediately followed he fairly ate out his heart wishing for a chance to distinguish himself and regain the favor with the officers that he felt he had lost. One day a hail came from aloft that seemed to promise such a chance and it set him tingling with excitement.

“Sail ho!” It was the first time the cry had been heard since the sighting of the little prize a week before, which had brought about Miles’s humiliation.

“She ain’t no Britisher, though,” said Todd oracularly when the strange brig was still so far away that her hull was barely visible. “More likely a Dane or Swede.”

Miles wondered skeptically how the old fellow knew, but decided to keep silent and await developments. The brig made no move to escape as the *Comet* swung toward her, and, sure enough—to Miles’s disappointment—flew Swedish colors on heaving to in obedience to Boyle’s signal. In another moment he was watching a boat from the *Comet*, under Lusson, riding the heavy swell over to the sides of the stranger.



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"The ol' man knows it ain't no Johnny Bull," said Todd, biting off a generous chew, "but he's lookin' for news."

Miles could see now that the dress and features of the crew bore out the colors at the brig's gaff, but he couldn't imagine how Todd had guessed the nationality at such a distance. Finally, after several minutes of thought, he put the question.

"Now, lad," replied the old salt with pity in his tone, "how could ye ask? Look at them heavy spars, and see how high the cro'-jack is rigged. You never seen an English ship rigged that style. Them things make the difference 'tween the sailor and the lubber. You've got to larn 'em. Perhaps ye don't remember that little Englishman we took last week?"

Miles flushed. He had good reason to remember that vessel, and he did not thank his old mentor for mentioning it.

"A man can larn a lot if he wants to," the other began again with a kindly grin, when Lusson suddenly reappeared climbing up the rope ladder. He went aft to report to Boyle, and then stopped to say a word to Gilmor, who hurried forward to where Todd and Miles were standing.

"Good news!" he cried, slapping Miles on the



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back. "The Swede says he left two British brigs and a large ship loading in Pernambuco for London. We are just in time to catch 'em. He says, too, that they carry a lot of guns, so there'll be a fine scrimmage!"

The news ran through the ship like wildfire, and every man jack of the crew looked as pleased as if the expected prize money were already in his pocket. The captain, too, who had been rather moody after his weeks of fruitless cruising, beamed like the rest.

"Herk!" he shouted, "go tell Peggy to serve duff to-day."

"Yassir," cried the darky, who turned to obey in such a hurry that he stumbled over a coil of rope and collided with Todd, knocking him clear across the deck, breathless and dazed with the shock. There was a roar of laughter from all hands; then the crew mounted the bulwarks and cheered the Swedish vessel with a will as she swung away on her course. Todd, meanwhile, disappeared below to find Herk and unload a piece of his mind.

At this time the *Comet* lay within twenty-five miles of the port of Pernambuco. A few hours' sailing brought her within sight of the harbor mouth, and then, tacking, she beat up the coast for a few miles



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to the entrance of a wide creek that afforded a safe anchorage.

“We couldn’t be in better luck,” said Gilmor to Miles as the anchor splashed overboard. “We’ve got to wait around here for those ships, and they say these tropical storms on a lee shore are murderous. But, see here, the old man’s sent me to tell all hands that the first lad to clap eyes on those Englishmen will get double prize money.”

However, the incentive was scarcely needed. Officers and men off duty already lined the rail or hung in the rigging, looking intently in the direction of Pernambuco. Through most of the night every officer, including Miles, paced to and fro between the lines of sleeping men peering out for the lights of the English ships. The moon was bright and the sky clear, with a fresh sea breeze that made the tropical night quite comfortable. Toward three in the morning, tired and disgusted, Miles crawled under a boat and fell asleep, not to awake till the swabbers routed him out in the morning deck-scrubbing.

“Nothin’ yet,” said Todd, to whom Miles put the anxious question as he rubbed his eyes. And, as the sun rose higher, the strain of watching relaxed. Some were even so skeptical as to suggest that the Swede had been fooling them. But Gilmor main-



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tained his station high in the foretop, despite the heat, and kept his glass leveled at Pernambuco.

"Come up with me, Miles!" he called down to his friend. Miles started to climb rather listlessly, when suddenly he heard Gilmor bawling, "Sail ho!" The very shrouds seemed to tingle with excitement as all hands sprang to the rail or in the rigging, and every eye strained toward the horizon.

"Where away?" came from a dozen throats in chorus.

"Sail ho!" again came the shout, "two points off the starboard bow."

Captain Boyle did not wait for further evidence than Gilmor's word. In a twinkling the quiet scene was transformed into a confusion of bawling orders and trampling feet. "All hands, up anchor, ahoy!" rang the length of the deck. The capstan bars flew round with a will, the anchor came dripping to the bows, and sails were shaken out in an unbelievably short time. A fresh breeze was curling the water, and it sent the *Comet* racing out to the open sea.

It was a sore disappointment to Miles that Gilmor, and not he, had been the first to sight the Englishmen. But he was among the first to congratulate the sharp-eyed young officer. Miles felt that Brad-



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ford and Boyle still regarded him with disfavor for his unfortunate remark about privateers, and he was most anxious to do something to set himself right again. He confided this feeling to Gilmor, who said with a laugh:

“Harkee, Miles, they aren’t as sore as you think; but there’s a fight coming in which you can square your yards again; only don’t be foolhardy. See”—and he pointed at the flecks of white which were now clearly visible—“there are four now, and we only bargained for three. If they all have guns, we’ll have to man our fourteen with ginger. Boyle says ‘the more the merrier.’”

Miles tingled with excitement at the idea. This was surely a different matter from ordinary privateering! At first, he couldn’t understand why the *Comet* kept so far away from her prey. Seemingly she was running away. Then it came to him that the strangers must not suspect the presence of the Yankee until it was too late to get back to neutral water.

For a few minutes Miles was kept below to take orders from the gunner. When he hurried on deck again he found the ship agog over the fact that the fourth sail was a man-of-war.

“Why didn’t the Swede tell us that there was a



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British man-of-war in port with the merchantman?" he asked the boatswain.

Todd put on an expression of pained and pitying surprise. "Why?" he repeated, "'Cos there wa'n't none. That there man-of-war brig ain't no Englishman; she ain't smart enough. Look, she's even more sloven in her trim than the merchantmen." And he spat disdainfully.

Miles squinted in vain to see what the old fellow seemed to read so clearly. "Well, what business has any other man-of-war to convoy those ships?"

The question was not answered, for Todd, at the signal from Bradford, was piping his whistle. The wheel went over, the foreyards swung, great bellying studding-sails broke out on them, and the *Comet* had turned around on her heel and was running before the wind under a cloud of canvas for the English squadron.



## CHAPTER VI

### CLEAR SHIP FOR ACTION!

FOR the first time Miles heard that thrilling cry, "Clear ship for action!" At the command of the first lieutenant, Miles went to work with the crews of the first division of guns, helping to cast them loose, knocking the tompions from the muzzles, and then piling up supplies of cartridges in metal-lined chests near by. The *Comet* had the new American naval cartridges, with the thin lead casing, instead of the old-fashioned flannel cartridges which were still used by the British navy. The Yankee invention was more expensive, but did not clog the gun as did the other, and made it possible to fire more rapidly.

Meanwhile, under Todd's energetic language, others of the crew had cleared the deck of every movable piece of woodwork or extra rope yarn, sprinkled the deck with sand, and hung the yards



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with chains, so that in case the rope rigging was shot away the yards would not fall. Long before the privateer shortened sail alongside the man-of-war, for whom Boyle had steered, the men stood ready at the guns, stripped to the waist, ready and eager for the expected fight.

To Miles all these hurried details of preparation for battle were inspiring, and he caught the contagion of excited anticipation that ran through the ship. He turned to with a will, unasked, and worked along with the sailors at removing and stowing the booms, boats, and deckhouses, until the deck presented that curiously bare, even surface that meant "cleared for action." But when the quartermaster went about, sprinkling sand on the decks, Miles realized for the first time that the phrase "running slippery with blood" stood for a grim fact, and his exultant feelings cooled down. He was not afraid, though he remembered Bradford's taunt, but he couldn't help thinking that it might be his own blood, or that of his friends—Gilmor, Lusson, and Todd—which would stain the deck before the next sunrise. So it was with serious eyes that Miles watched the enemy in anticipation of his first battle.

About seven o'clock the *Comet* forged alongside to windward of the strange man-of-war, and hoisted



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the Stars and Stripes. The other replied by fluttering out the Portuguese ensign, and hailed a moment later. Lusson swung himself out on the fore chains and conducted a brief parley in mixed French and Portuguese.

"He says, sir," reported the officer to Boyle, "to stand by for to take a boat."

"All right," grumbled the captain, with his eye on the merchant ships running away from him, "but that's the last favor I do him."

The schooner shot up into the wind and lay rolling in the heavy seas while the Portuguese officer came on board. Lusson continued to act as interpreter, but the gestures of the Portuguese were so graphic that Miles could guess the substance of the man's message before Lusson made his translation.

"*Alors*, he say ze brig ees under orders zese English ships to convoy to London; and he cannot pairmeet ze *Comet* to—to interfere. Also, if you attack zem (zis pig says) ze consequences shall be bad for Captain Boyle."

"Tell the Dago to cast his dirty eye on that!" replied Boyle, drawing his letters of marque from his breast pocket.

The Portuguese scanned the document for fully



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two minutes, though he couldn't read a word of it, and returned it with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders and some emphatic language.

"He say now," continued the interpreter, scowling darkly, "eet make no difference. Zose ships is armed and heavily manned; his own ship has twenty guns, ze ozzers zirty-four, making total feefty-four to our fourteen."

"Tell him," replied Boyle, "that don't scare me, and if he wants to fire the first gun he can look out for the consequences."

As the Portuguese officer went back the privateer fell off before the wind. Once more a hail came from the man-of-war, calling for a boat from the *Comet*. But Boyle replied in terms so emphatic that Lusson had great trouble in expurging and translating. By this time much precious time had been lost, and the merchantmen were far in the lead. But the air was clear, and a full moon made their sails glimmer almost as brightly as if it had been daylight.

"Gadsden!" shouted Boyle.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Do you think that it would be glory enough if we fight all four of those?"

"Aye, sir." Miles grinning sheepishly, for the



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captain had punctuated his question with a ponderous wink.

“Very well, young man, report to Lieutenant Bradford for orders in action.”

“Mr. Gadsden,” said that officer when Miles reported for duty, “what we shall want most is ammunition and primers in a hurry. Supply the guns in this division until further orders.”

Though Miles had imagined a position of glory beside his commander, he had grown wiser and knew better now than to make any comment. If a “powder monkey” was what the *Comet* needed, a powder monkey he would be along with the ship’s boys, and he hurried down to the gunner in charge of the magazine. This official explained to him that he must cover the cartridge with his jacket so as to keep off sparks, and told him to watch his own clothing for specks of burning wads, etc., before he returned to the magazine. As an additional precaution, the gunner had rigged a heavy flap of water-soaked felt in the doorway with a slit cut in the middle through which he was to serve the ammunition.

After seeing that the guns of his division were well supplied, Miles took a perch on the gunwale under the foreshrouds and waited, quivering with excitement for the battle to open. About eight



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o'clock the swift-sailing *Comet* began to overtake the big English ship, with the two English brigs near by.

"To quarters!" shouted Captain Boyle through his speaking trumpet, and no one needed to have the order repeated. The large crew of the privateer made it possible to man the six guns on both port and starboard sides at the same time, besides furnishing the regular crew at each of the large swivel guns amidships. In a twinkling the men were lined up in their positions. Miles was one of a few greenhorns who did not know where to stand, but he was soon instructed. He found himself, without understanding why, standing at attention just behind the breech of one of the broadside guns in Bradford's division. As he glanced along the line of the battery he saw that the corresponding positions for the other guns were filled by the powder boys, and the young men who for a chance at prize money in the lucky *Comet* had been content to ship as "boys."

"This is rubbing it in!" thought Miles ruefully, as he reflected on his humble station. But in a moment he had to admit that he could do nothing else to help and ought to make the best of it.

On each side of the shining gun stood the gun's crew, heels clicked together at attention, but with heads turned and eyes bent on the big English ships.



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“Strike and heave to!” roared Boyle. “Strike and heave to, or I’ll sink you!”

But the *Comet* had a tremendous way, and before Boyle could get an answer he found himself ahead.

“I’ll be back presently,” he shouted cheerfully, and kept on his tearing course after the two brigs. Coming alongside the nearest one he sent the *Comet* up into the wind.

“Fire!” he shouted.

“Fire!” echoed every officer to his division. Instantly the captain of Miles’s crew, sweeping him aside and bidding him stand clear, touched the glowing end of his slow match to the quill of powder that was stuck in the priming hole of the gun. Almost at the same instant a jet of flame spurted up from the touchhole of every gun on that side and all six thundered at once, kicking back viciously with the recoil.

To Miles the concussion of that broadside seemed the most terrible sound he had ever heard. Most of the gunners, he had noticed, tied their black neck scarfs around their ears, and now he saw the reason. After the first discharge the guns were fired as quickly as they could be loaded and aimed, and the engaged side of the *Comet’s* deck showed a



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line of straining, jumping cannon, thundering continuously. As the privateer was to windward, the smoke from her fire covered the brig so that Miles could not see what damage was done to the enemy.

“Gadsden!”

Miles awoke to the fact that he was staring excitedly into the smoke, forgetful of the duties he had to perform. When he next appeared on deck, carrying a double load of cartridges, the *Comet* came alongside the ship which they had passed a little time before, this time to leeward. Again there came a flash and a deafening thunderclap as the starboard broadside smashed into the ship, and a second later the port guns were finding a target in the third brig which was still farther to leeward.

Back and forth Miles ran, along with the powder boys, determined to do his level best for the *Comet* and the flag. The deck was now smothered in the smoke of the two discharges, through which the battle lanterns burned dimly and the moon was seldom visible. Miles saw the red flashes and heard the confused roar of the enemy's guns on both sides. The bulwarks near him trembled or broke with the blow of solid shot and things whirled by his head. A brawny seaman suddenly clapped his hands to his



side, stumbled forward a few steps and fell on his face.

Miles had never seen sudden death before, and the sight made him sick and faint.

“Steady, lad, steady.” It was Todd at his elbow. “You’ll get used to it in a minute.”

“Bear a hand here, Gadsden!” shouted Gilmor the next instant, and Miles turned to see him standing by a young fellow who was trying to crawl to the companionway with a broken leg. Miles ran to help the wounded man below to the little cockpit, where the surgeon waited with his instruments in a shining row on the table before him.

“Bring back some more primers!” shouted Bradford as he saw Miles disappear down the hatch.

Back again on deck with fresh primers, Miles saw that the *Comet* had tacked once more. By this time the cannonade had been so continuous that he was immediately called upon to help fill the fire buckets and dash water on the heated guns. All that he could see of the progress of the battle was the constant flashing of guns and an occasional group of masts and sails above the high walls of smoke, but he knew that Boyle was steering in and out among the four, fighting all of them at once and



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yet never allowing himself to be surrounded. At first it looked like wild confusion to Miles, but, after a while, he saw that the British merchantmen were trying to dodge about in order to expose the *Comet* to the broadsides of the man-of-war. But Boyle cleverly managed it so that while both his broadsides were constantly ablaze upon the Englishman, the Portuguese was always in danger of firing upon some vessel of his convoy in attempting to hit the Yankee.

At midnight one of the English ships hailed to surrender, her captain crying out that she was ready to sink. There was a lull in the uproar as Lieutenant Bradford with a boat's crew went to take possession. Suddenly, the Portuguese man-of-war appeared, and without warning poured a broadside upon the little boat. Had the aim been good, the cutter would have been a mass of splinters; but even as it was, she was so badly damaged that the survivors got her back to the *Comet's* side only with the greatest efforts. That blow cost Boyle five good men; and white with rage, he steered straight for the meddlesome Portuguese, letting fly with every gun that bore.

At such close quarters the fight could not last long. While it continued, it seemed to Miles as if



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there was a steady rain of shot and splinters. Suddenly, he saw Gilmor struck on the head by a flying block. The young officer whirled around and dropped like a log.

“Stand by, Gadsden!” cried Boyle, as Miles started toward Gilmor.

“Aye, aye, sir!”

As Gilmor’s limp figure was carried below, Miles took the vacant station and thereafter shouted Boyle’s orders to Todd. To transmit orders accurately, some of which he did not understand, was a task calling for coolness and promptness. All the while, Miles was in an agony of suspense as to the fate of Gilmor. Again and again he had to duck to avoid flying splinters, and once he nearly fell when a searing pain cut across his thigh. Binding up the wound, with his scarf, however, he went on with the orders without interruption.

In fifteen minutes, the Portuguese had had more than she wanted and beat a hasty retreat. Then Boyle ran his ship alongside the nearest brig, which promptly surrendered. There was one more brig to be accounted for to make the victory complete, and that was far in the lead, running away. Determined to get them all, Boyle cracked on sail in chase, and Miles kept his station, unwilling to ask to be re-



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lieved till the fight was over. But as soon as the brig was caught up with, she surrendered without another shot.

Unfortunately for the *Comet*, shortly after she had overhauled the *Bowes*—which was the name of the last vessel captured—the wind chopped around so as to give the two Englishmen left behind a fair wind back to Pernambuco. By this time, too, the moon had set in clouds and nothing whatever could be seen of these two. The Americans stood by their prize, anxiously awaiting the dawn.

Meanwhile, Miles remained on duty, but as soon as Boyle allowed him to leave his station, he limped below to find Gilmor. Fortunately, the little cockpit was not crowded, and some were already leaving with their arms in slings or their heads bound with blood-stained bandages.

“How’s Mr. Gilmor?” asked Miles anxiously of Doctor Banks.

“Able to speak for himself, thank you,” feebly replied that young man, who was lying in a dark corner with his head swathed in bandages. “Something knocked me into dreamland up there.”

“Pipe down,” growled the surgeon; “let me look at that leg of yours, Gadsden.”

Miles had his wound washed and dressed—a



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flesh wound more painful than serious—and dropped to sleep on the planks beside Gilmor.

Late the following morning, he climbed painfully to the deck where Gilmor had preceded him. He found the *Comet* running off the harbor of Pernambuco with the *Bowes* trotting obediently in her wake. But safe from the privateer's clutches he could see the other two English vessels, shattered in rigging and hull and listed badly, creeping to cover in neutral waters, while the man-of-war limped slowly in their wake.

Boyle was pacing back and forth with vexation written on his face. "Well, lads," he said, his face brightening as he saw the two friends, "I hope ye are not hurted much? That was a pretty little rumpus last night, eh? We have only one prize instead of three, but we stove 'em up a bit, anyway. I'd go a thousand miles to finish what I have to say to that Portuguese." And he laughed with boyish delight.

Miles did not realize that the "pretty little rumpus" had few parallels on record, but he knew that it was a splendid battle and he was proud to have borne a part in it.

On examination, the *Bowes* proved to be much less injured by the guns of the privateer than any



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of the other vessels in that four-to-one fight, and with her hull full of wheat, she was a prize well worth taking back to Baltimore. Accordingly, after Boyle saw the other merchantmen disappear into the harbor he headed the *Comet* north, signaling the *Bowes* to follow in her wake.



## CHAPTER VII

### TODD SPINS A YARN

DULL days succeeded the exciting night of the battle, though for a time the work of putting the ship to rights furnished plenty of occupation for officers and men. Finally, however, the ship's carpenter finished his repairs, the quartermaster announced that all the scrubbing and swabbing had been properly done, and Todd was satisfied that the rigging was shipshape "alow and aloft." In repairing the cut rigging, Miles was allowed to assist and practice his newly learned splices under the boatswain's critical eye. When the ordinary ship's routine followed, Miles found not much to do even when on watch, and the broiling tropical sun made him content to sit still much of the day and listen to the yarn-spinning among the sailors.

One blazing hot day, when the *Comet* was barely slipping through a glassy sea, he made up his mind to hunt the old boatswain down and not



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let him escape until he had told the story of the maimed ear.

He had tried a number of times to corner Todd and wheedle out of him the story of the lost ear, but all his efforts had come to naught. The many calls upon the boatswain, due to the fact that his position was an active and responsible one, gave him opportunities to evade the issue. By suddenly discovering imperative calls to duty, he had blocked Miles's efforts so far; but the latter finally managed to concoct a plan that seemed likely to succeed. He remembered that Todd had hinted once that the ear had been lost in the battle between the *Bon Homme Richard* and the *Serapis*. Knowing that the boatswain was proud of the fact that he was one of the heroes of the great fight, Miles concluded that it would be easy to get him to tell the story of the battle, and trusted that, along with the details, he would find the tale of the missing ear. He decided to use a certain amount of guile and diplomacy in dealing with the old man.

Finding the old fellow alone, he skillfully drew him into a discussion of the great fight by pretending to believe that the *Bon Homme Richard's* commander deserved but a small part of the credit for the victory over the *Serapis*. It had been the fight-



ing qualities of the crew that had decided the issue of the day, he contended, not the personal qualities of Paul Jones. As the old fellow hadn't visited the lee rail for a full three-minute period, his mouth was too full for utterance, but, at this statement, almost blasphemous according to the old bos'n's notions, he became almost purple, and after a rush to the taffrail and a frantic spurt to "loo'ard," he came back with the light of battle in his eye.

"W-wot?" he sputtered, "w-wot's that I'm a-hearin' ye say? 'Fightin' qualities o' the crew'? Well for the love of Chinese gods and little measly fishes, did ye ever hear such lubber's langwidge! Why, bless my bloody bights and bobstays—but a-beggin' yer parding, I was most a-cussin' an' I thought I was free from that vice intirely fer evermore! But dog-bite my futtock shrouds—this here talk o' yourn do beat all creation! Why, by-by jimminy crickets—beggin' yer parding, I ain't a-goin' ter cuss, sir, but——"

"Oh, go ahead—relieve your feelin's, Todd, you don't hurt mine," said Miles, secretly elated at the old man's perturbation. "I can appreciate your feeling a little hurt because I don't think Paul Jones is as big a man as you do, and I am willing to be convinced that he is the greatest fighter that ever trod a deck if you can give me the facts to prove it."



"I am just the bucko to do that thar selfsame thing, an' hopin' you'll excuse me fer sayin' it, me bein' old enough ter be yer gran'sire, I'll take the liberty uv remarkin' that it's gol-a-a-awful shame that there's any boy with good American blood in his veins that don't know wot sort uv a man Paul Jones wuz 'thout it a-takin' a hour a-tellin' of it to him!"

Miles was inwardly chuckling. "I have him under weigh with all sails set," he thought. So he suggested that they climb to the maintop, where there would be no interruptions, and have the matter out. Todd readily agreed, but declared that he "must get everything in shipshape fust," as "he was a-goin' ter settle this here subjec' once fer all an' evermore." He called to a brawny, swarthy bos'n's mate, the length of whose queue had often attracted Miles's attention: "Here you—Brad Hays! You long-tailed lascar, keep yer eyes peeled while I go aloft to explain some pressin' matters to the young gentleman." The mate looked curiously at the pair, feeling that "there was something in the wind," and Miles gave him a wink that the old bos'n almost intercepted as Hays turned and rejoined the men he had been engaged with when summoned by Todd.

"They're weaving a sword-mat, aren't they?"



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Miles asked pleasantly of Todd as they started toward the shrouds.

"Not by forty fathom! They're makin' uv a panch," he said shortly.

"What's a panch!—never mind, let's settle this Paul Jones business," said Miles, and Todd grunted sourly.

When they were ensconced in comfortable positions on the top, the old man remarked that he thought he could "clear the rail," and tried an experimental spurt before deciding that he had secured a suitable spot for spinning a long yarn. That the trial was a success as a rangefinder Miles could see by the brown cat's-paw that appeared ten feet out from the ship's side. So he settled down to listen.

"There ain't no use in wastin' no time in circumnavigation," began Todd; "you know enough about this here battle to know that the six ole eighteen-pounders to the *Richard's* lower gun-deck battery put 'emselves out o' business almost at the first fire. They was a lot o' old pieces o' scrap-iron wot had been condemned as fit fer nuthin' by the French navy an' had been mounted in the *Richard* at l'Orient. Well, anyhow, they only belched eight shots. Two of 'em busted into smithereens at the fust fire an' killed nigh



every man in the two gun crews, besides heavin' up the main gun deck that was over 'em and skeerin' everybody in the after part of the ship into duck fits. Night was just a-comin' on an' a big, full moon was climbin' the sky. We had a smooth sea an' we couldn't a made a better night fer a fight. We wuz trottin' along about a cable's length from the *Serapis* an' givin' her merry old Nick, while her metal was a-crashin' into our vitals almost continuous. Putty soon two or three of our twelve-pounders on the gun deck was dismounted or crippled an' shots an' splinters was a-flyin' everywhere. I was on the quarter-deck, where a batch uv us had been stationed with muskets by the commodore, an' I say to you I never see sich broadsidin' in my life.

"It was gittin' along toward eight bells an' we had been bangin' away fer sump'n over half a hour when we begun to notice that the *Serapis* was workin' in closer to us, and I seen that she was a-tryin' to luff athwart our hawse. The Britisher, after our French guns blew up, could throw half ag'in as much metal as we could, but we had more marines; so we were givin' 'em merry Hades with the musketry. Cap'n Pearson must have seen that if he kep' on, the *Richard* would foul him amidships, bows on, an' then I reckon the way our musket fire was a-pepperin' him



had some effec', fer he boxhailed his ship, paid off his bow an' tried to let her fall off to loo'ard to clear the *Richard*. But her stern swung to and afore she could git headway she had run her jib boom into our mizzen riggin'. I dropped my musket an' jumped with a dozen others to the larboard rail an' we throwed grapnels into the *Serapis's* backstays. The hooks caught, but, dog it, the lines parted an' the Britisher fell off. I jumped back for my musket and saw Billy Lowes, a shipmate from my old town wot I had knowed sence he wasn't any higher 'n that there capstan—I seen Billy pickin' up my gun. 'Gimme my musket, you swab!' I says, 'there's your gun over there.' Well, as I says that, down he pitches right on his head an' rolls down off the poop deck 'fore I could ketch him. I seen him land in a mess of blood an' sand when a round shot came a-crashin' through the rail, bringin' a hammock with it an' knockin' Billy's body halfway acrost the deck. Course, I was sorry about poor Billy, partickler ez I had just called him a swab; but it was hot times, an' I grabbed my gun an' turned her loose at the port-hole of a eighteen-pounder that seemed to belch a extry lively fire.

“Just about this time I seen the commodore go below; and Red Jerry, a Indian that was port fire on



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the gun deck, told me afterwards that Cap'n Jones come down near where he was tendin' the slow match waitin' to tetch off the gun when she was laid, an' he says—which is to say, Cap'n Jones says, speakin' to Lieutenant Dale—' Dick, his metal is too heavy for us! He's hammerin' us to pieces. We've got to get hold of him. Be prepared to leave this deck, an' when I give the order, bring what men you have left on the spar deck, and give 'em small arms for boardin' when you come up! '

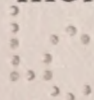
" Well, I was a-wonderin' wot was up an' wishin' the commodore'd come back, as the very sight of him give me more stomach fer the fight, when I seen Cap'n Jones come a-bouncin' up the ladder an' a minute afterwards I seen him say sump'n' to his orderly, John Downes, an' then turn to his other orderly, Gerard, a Frenchman, an' point an' say sump'n' to him. You know he had two orderlies so that he could git orders to the French part of the crew just the same as to his Yankees. He could speak both langwidges, but you see he couldn't be everywhere even if he was Paul Jones. But to git back to my story: In a minute or so I seen the men from the gun deck come tumblin' out with cutlasses an' pikes an' muskets crazy to get at the Britishers an' glad to get out o' the death trap where they had



been a-fightin' 'thout the relief o' seein' wot was goin' on. The place they had left was a reg'lar shambles. Why, lad, on one o' the guns o' the for'ard starboard division there had been nineteen differ'nt men, an' when the order came to tumble out only one uv her 'riginal crew was left an' that was little Red Jerry, the Indian.

"The distance between the ships wasn't more'n a biscuit's toss by this time, an' the commodore was crazy to make it less. If the *Serapis* got one more breakaway, on either tack clear of the *Richard*, where she wouldn't be afeard uv the grapnels, she could bring her lower tier o' eighteen-pound barkers into play and the *Richard* would go to Davy Jones's locker. Just about this time I heard a roar on our port quarter, an' there was that French hound Landais, with our pardner ship, the *Alliance*, pourin' a broadside o' solid shot into us! Before we got our wits, bang! he sent another crash o' grape, chain shot an' double headers into our guts. Then he ran off out o' gunshot close-hauled. Well, sir, I was so paralyzed I forgot to fire my gun till 'spang! went a red-hot pain acrost the side o' my head an' I was reminded o' the fact that the *Serapis* was still alive an' kickin'.

"Jest at this moment a lucky little gust hit our





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sails, while we shut off the wind from the *Serapis* and blanketed her completely. The commodore seen it like a flash. He turned an' screamed a order an' we swung athwart the hawse o' the *Serapis*. Right here, my lad, I want to tell ye sump'n' that shows what kind o' commodore Cap'n Jones was. I said a 'lucky' puff o' wind struck us. Luck alone wouldn't a-done us no good then, fer a spell before a shot had carried our wheel away, busted the tiller an' cracked the iron strap that held it to the rudder head. But when Cap'n Jones had been overhaulin' the *Richard* at l'Orient he had fitted a spare tiller to the rudder stem where it passed through the gun room below an' had rove give-an'-take tackle to it so's we could steer by hand in case the wheel or the main tiller got damaged in action. Well, that sharp bit o' foresight saved us an' give us our last chance o' lickin' the Britisher.

"The *Serapis* tried to turn tail and run like a chicken with a hawk swoopin' fer him, but Cap'n Jones had swung the *Richard* round under the *Serapis's* jib boom an' me an' Red Jerry an' a couple o' others hearin' the commodore yell: 'Hold her there, my hearties,' with the turn uv a hawser made her fast to the *Richard's* mizzenmast. Then the good old *Richard* scraped along the *Serapis's* side



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till the outboard fluke of the Britisher's starboard anchor hooked into our mizzen chains.

"In a flash Cap'n Jones leaped forward an', grabbin' a rope from a bos'n's mate, turned three hitches with his own hands afore any uv us could get near enough to help him. Yes, sir, did it with his own hands! I was there an' I seen 'im! His hat went overboard in the excitement an' Midshipman West Linthwaite fetched another hat from the cabin for him. 'Never mind the hat, West,' he said laughin', 'put it back in the cabin; I'll fight this out in my scalp! I've a mind to peel off my coat, too! If I could, I'd fight in the buff like the gun-deck hearties.'

"Meantime, the guns of the *Serapis* was belchin' shot through our gun deck. But nobody wuz there to be bothered. We were all above decks and pourin' it into 'em with the small arms. They tell me that 'leven men dropped at the *Serapis's* wheel with musket balls in 'em. Captain Pearson, of the *Serapis*, ordered the ring stopper an' shank painter cut away so as to free him from us, but our commodore wasn't goin' to let go his death grip. I saw him with his hat off standing on the poop deck yellin' to the French marines in their own lingo an' makin' 'em keep a steady fire on the spot where we'd lashed the *Serapis's* anchor. Soon I found myself on the



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poop deck, too, firin' away, when all of a suddint I heerd the commodore yell: 'Hi, there, Bill Todd! Give me that gun quick!' Yes, sir, called me by name, an' my word fer it, he could a-done the same to any Frenchy or Yankee on the deck. Yes, sir, knowed 'em all! I give him the musket an' I seen a British leftenant, that was rushin' with a ax to cut the fastenin's, stumble an' fall when my gun roared out almost at my ear."

"You didn't lose it there, did you?" interrupted Miles, who had been thrilled into rapt attention.

"Lose what?" asked Todd impatiently.

"The ear."

"Oh, durn the ear! There was half a dozen marines, some French, some Americans, standin' around the commodore loadin' their firelocks an' handin' 'em to him when he wanted 'em while he was dancin' around an' talkin' to 'em in French and English both. We had had nigh about enough bad luck fer one ship to have to stand, but it looked like there warn't to be no let up in it. Fust them French guns blows up, then that crack-brained brute of a Frenchman in the *Alliance* riddles us. Next we gets so many holes below our water line that spite o' all we could do we had five feet o' water in the hold, an' to make matters worse the flash o' the *Serapis's* guns



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an' the burnin' wads come right into our gun deck an' set the wreckage an' splinters on fire.

“John Burbank, the master at arms, thinkin' the ship was sinkin', opened the orlop hatch an' turned loose over two hundred prisoners what we had below decks. When the commodore seen 'em streamin' up an' found out what had happened he poked his pistol right in Burbank's face an' pulled the trigger. It snapped fire though, so Cap'n Jones jist reached out an' whacked Burbank a rap in the burr o' the ear with the barrel of it an' laid him out on the deck. About fifty of the prisoners had got on deck, but Mr. Potter, one o' the midshipmen, an' a few uv our men with cutlasses stood at the hatch an' held the rest back. The commodore then ordered all the prisoners on deck to man the pumps an' some uv 'em grabbed holt, but one uv 'em, a fellow that had been cap'n of a ship we'd took at Leith, yelled, ‘Don't touch the pumps, men, let the Yankee pirate sink!’ Pierre Gerard, Cap'n Jones's orderly, aimed a pistol at him an' says, ‘You do wot ze commodore orders! The Britisher grabbed at the pistol, which belched, an' he fell, deader'n a herrin'.

“That took the starch out uv 'em all, an' Mr. Dale soon had 'em at the pumps. All this here was in the line o' putty bad luck, but the wust was yet to



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come. The two ships had been driftin' around, hanging to each other like a couple o' bulldogs, when up come that devil of a Landais again an' poured another broadside into us. Fust time he raked us we got all the shot, but this time he wasn't partic'lar, an' the *Serapis* got her share of it, too, wich warn't much satisfaction to us, by the way, we was so crazy mad at the hull outrageous business. Well, we kep' pluggin' away, an' you know wot happened about the commodore tellin' 'em that he was 'just beginnin' to fight.' After he'd yelled that to 'em he seen old Bard McKinsey standin' near him rammin' a firelock, an' he bawls at him: 'Hey, Bard, old trump, what say you to quittin'?' An' old Bard says back at him cheerful like: 'There's a shot left in the locker, sir!' The commodore laughed as happy as a boy. Then a new idea seemed to occur to him, an' he turned to Harry Gardner, who was acting gunner, an' said: 'Tell Mr. Fanning to see if he can drop a hand grenade through the enemy's main hatch!' Then he watched as Midshipman Fanning crept out on the yardarm. Gardner was behind him with a slow match an' back of him was Jerry Evans, of Nantucket, an' Pete Nolte, a Swede, each with a bucket of grenades. At the third throw Mr. Fanning did the trick, an' as the crash come the



## TODD SPINS A YARN

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commodore waved his arms and cheered. We found out afterwards that the explosion killed an' crippled upward of fifty. It certainly did take all o' the fight out o' the *Serapis*.

"Well, the end soon come. When Cap'n Jones give the order, John Mayrant, spite o' the fact that he was already badly wounded, went over the rail with his men. A Britisher jabbed him through the thigh and Mayrant sent a pistol ball through the sailor's neck. This was the last man killed an' it was soon all over. Captain Pearson grabbed the ensign halyards an' pulled down the *Serapis's* colors himself. Mayrant turned, an' seein' Lieutenant Dale standin' on the *Richard's* rail, holdin' onto the main-topmast backstay, yelled to him: 'Stop firin'. He has struck! Come on board an' take possession!' Mr. Dale swung himself onto the rail of the *Serapis* an' after shaking hands with Mayrant, hurried to Cap'n Pearson an' sent him aboard the *Richard*. An' that's how it ended."

"Ah-h!" said Miles in a long-drawn sigh. "It makes a man proud that he's an American, doesn't it?"

"Yes, an' proud that he has a chance to fight under the same flag that waved over the great John Paul Jones," sententiously rejoined Todd. Miles



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was so absorbed that he was halfway down the shrouds before it occurred to him to inquire about the fate of the missing ear.

“Oh, well, we’ll save that for another time,” growled the old fellow, and that was all the satisfaction Miles got.



## CHAPTER VIII

### MILES'S FIRST COMMAND

THE depressing heat of the tropics rather took the zest from the fencing lessons which Miles had continued with Lusson ever since that first day's trial when he was ignominiously disarmed. Lusson, however, insisted on Miles's going through a few minutes' rapid exchange of thrusts and parries every evening after sundown when the motion of the *Comet* was sufficiently smooth to let the fencers keep their feet.

The rest of his spare time Miles spent in pursuing his course in seamanship under old Bill Todd. The strange orders that sounded at first like a different language he began to understand, and to be able to repeat intelligently. There was no such thing on board as a book on seamanship in those days, for that was a science all seamen had in their heads and fingers; but Miles used to write out carefully the orders for various ship evolutions on loose sheets of



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paper and pin them together. These he would study over by night, so as to be able to meet Todd's searching questions at the next day's lesson.

One morning, a week or so after the great fight off Pernambuco, Boyle handed Miles the trumpet and said in the most matter-of-fact voice: "Take the deck, sir! Bring the vessel about on the other tack and hold her due northwest."

Then he went below. Amidships, seated carelessly on a gun slide, was Bradford, who, Miles knew, would watch him sharply. Gilmor and Luson were below.

"Go ahead, lad, it's easy; bowse your thinkin' tacks right down to the bumpkins and show what you can do!" It was Todd speaking in a low tone at his elbow. The breath came fast for a minute as Miles looked on the bellying sails and the curling white caps that raced alongside. Then he stepped on the nearest gun slide, and, holding on to the shrouds, put the trumpet to his mouth and shouted:

"Ready about! Stations for stays!"

Todd's whistle piped and the men scampered to the ropes.

"Ready! Ready! Hard a-lee, quartermaster!"

"Helm's a-lee, sir," was the response from the wheel.



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“Ease off the fore and jib sheets; overhaul the lifts and trusses!”

The head sails flapped as the schooner swung up into the wind with a roaring of foam at her bows.

“Rise tacks and sheets!” shouted Miles, “haul taut, mainsail haul!”

The yards swung smoothly, and then as the sails on the main caught the wind, “Haul well taut! Let go and haul! Right the helm!”

The sails filled, and the vessel keeled gracefully over on the opposite tack.

“Ease her off a bit, quartermaster!” Miles continued. “Hold her due nor’west!”

“Aye, aye, sir; due nor’west she is!” replied the helmsman, and the evolution was performed. Todd gave no sign beyond “very fair to middlin’, lad,” to show that he was satisfied with Miles’s performance. But Miles himself was immensely pleased at the feat, especially as he was frequently made officer of the deck after that day and sometimes with more difficult evolutions to perform than a mere change of tack. In fact, if it were not for Todd’s merciless criticisms, he would have felt quite competent to take the *Comet* all the way back to Baltimore.

He had his chance as commander, however, much sooner than he expected. Two small vessels



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had been taken, without the firing of a shot, so that at the end of a fortnight after the capture of the *Bowes* there were three prizes bowling along in company with the *Comet*. Then, a week later, Boyle overhauled a small English schooner bound for Jamaica. Unfortunately, she was sailing in ballast, but as she looked like a tight little craft, Boyle decided that she was worth taking along.

"Gadsden!" he called to Miles after the schooner had complied with the orders to heave to and surrender, "take four men and go aboard her. I depend on you to bring her into port. Keep near us and signal if you get into any trouble."

"Aye, aye, sir!" cried Miles, trying hard not to show how pleased he was. In command of a vessel of his own! This was a far better home-coming than as a mere supernumerary on the *Comet*.

"You see," added Boyle slyly, "with Bradford and Lusson on the other prizes, Mr. Gilmor here is the only other officer I have left, and he's too valuable to spare. Can you guarantee to bring the craft in, think you?"

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Miles smartly.

Boyle smiled a little, and Todd observed mildly, as if talking to himself: "Only thing I could ever



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guarantee on salt water is rough knocks. Now when I was on the *Richard* I was——”

“Shut up, Todd,” said Boyle with a grin.

Miles was too excited to notice whether they were laughing at him or not. He hastened to pick out four men, including the faithful Herk, and submitted his list to Boyle for approval. In a few minutes he called away a boat, and almost forgot in his excitement to say good-by to Todd and Gilmor.

As the cutter shot out from the privateer, he heard Todd call out cheerily, “Good-by, captain!” followed by a laugh from the knot of sailors that stood by. Miles pretended not to hear.

“When I was on the *Richard*,” called Gilmor in Todd’s nasal voice, and Miles, as he took a last look, saw Todd turn to protest. On boarding the schooner, he found the captain awaiting him. He was a man of about forty-five, with more the air of a gentleman than could often be found in his station. He stepped forward and said stiffly:

“I am Captain Tomlinson, of the *Lapwing*, at present the prize of your vessel over there——”

“The *Comet*, Captain Boyle, sir,” replied Miles courteously, “and I am Acting-Midshipman Gadsden ordered to take command.” Miles had made



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up this title for himself on the way across to the *Lapwing*. "Personally, I regret——"

"Well, Mr. Gadsden, it's the chance of war," said the older man, unbending at Miles's courteous manner, "but let me tell you this is no unmixed evil. The *Aeolus*, of our navy, overhauled me three days ago and impressed four of my best hands. I have only three left and we have been hard put to it even in this good weather. It is bad enough to have to dodge privateers like yours over there without being robbed by the men-of-war of your own flag."

"The impressment business is what we are fighting this war over," replied Miles. "If it vexes an Englishman, you can imagine how it affects us, sir."

The discussion was broken off by the immediate necessity of making sail. When the *Lapwing* was fairly under way, Miles sought out the Englishman. His natural chivalry for a foe in his hands was heightened by the fact that he, a lad of seventeen, should supersede in command a man of Tomlinson's age. Accordingly, he told him that he would be glad to have him retain his cabin quarters and mess with him, if he would give parole. Tomlinson readily consented to give his parole, and added, after thanking Miles for his courtesy, "Perhaps my longer



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experience on the sea may help you before you reach port."

"Thank you," answered the boy, with a feeling of annoyance, and then he thought: "How I wish everybody wouldn't treat me as if I were a green-horn. Now that I've got the chance, I'll show them that I can sail this schooner as well as anybody."

For the first day all went smoothly. A boat-swain's mate from the *Comet*, named Martin, Miles appointed sailing master, and the young commander had little to do but walk up and down by the wheel, wishing that he didn't look so boyish, but enjoying his position of command immensely. The only thing that worried him was the fact that the *Lap-wing* was slow. When he turned in, the lights of the *Comet* were far ahead; and when he took the deck at sunrise, the privateer was hull down on the horizon.

The sky was covered with a thick haze and the wind was blowing half a gale with a promise of more. Already the waves were roaring at the ship's bows, and foaming down her lee scuppers. As Miles noticed these things, he felt suddenly very lonely and inexperienced and wished with all his heart that his good friend Bill Todd were not so far away.



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"I wonder why the *Comet* left us so far behind? We must try to catch up with her," he said to the sailing master who stood at the wheel.

"I don't think this old tub will ever do it, sir," replied that worthy.

"She ought to make better time on this wind," said Miles. "Can't we shake out that fore-tops'l?"

"She can," replied the other dubiously, "but it ain't only a fresh breeze, it's blowin' up trouble. I don't like that sky; and the bottom's plumb fell out of the barometer from the looks of it. See Mother Carey's chickens there? I should advise, sir, reefin' fore and main."

Miles remembered that the *Comet* tore away under a great press of sail during that gale at Hampton Roads when they ran the blockade, and could not see why the *Lapwing* could not do something like it.

"Well," he said with spirit, "I won't reef yet awhile, and I'll shake out that fore-tops'l."

Martin looked at Miles with astonishment, but he was too well trained to disobey. Reluctantly he gave the order, and the foresail went to the top, bellying out instantly so that the spar bent like a whip. The ship rode more heavily by the head than before and took on much more water. Miles was no fool, and he realized at once that the sailing



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master was right; but he felt that it would be a humiliation in the eyes of the crew if he ordered the sail taken in immediately.

But the matter was settled for him. In five minutes from the time the sail was spread the topmast cracked under a sudden squall and went over, a mass of tangled wreckage. A shout arose from all hands. Instantly Martin roared orders for righting ship and clearing the wreckage away, without waiting for Miles to speak. Miles realized only too well his mistake now and his humiliation in his own eyes as well as those of his crew.

"Beg pardon, sir," apologized Martin, "we had to act quick!"

"You were right, Martin," said Miles after the wreck was cleared away. "Now order the sails reefed as you think best."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the sailing master, pleased at Miles's frank confession, "I don't like the looks of that sky. We are in for dirty weather."

Accordingly, double reefs were taken in the fore and main sails, a single double-reefed jib did duty at the bowsprit, preventer-lashings made fast everything that was movable, and life lines were rigged along the deck. All day the ragged, dirty clouds tore across the sky before an ever-increasing wind,



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and great, leaden seas plunged and seethed over the little craft with heavier and heavier blows. The messes had to be served cold, for the ship tossed too violently to keep a galley fire. Miles scarcely went below that day. What little he ate, Herk brought to him on deck, where he took counsel of Martin, and anxiously watched the increase of the storm.

"Nuthin' for it but to p'int up into the gale and try to ride her out," Martin advised.

"All right, order her up," Miles replied. In talking seamanship with Todd, Miles remembered the old boatswain's remark that there was no evolution so dangerous as to try to bring a sharp schooner up into the wind in a heavy gale, and he watched with the deepest anxiety to see what Martin would do.

Scarcely had Miles said "All right," when Martin ordered all sail taken in but the double-reefed foresail. Then, with his eye scanning the huge combing waves, he waited. One great roller surged and broke, roaring across the *Lapwing's* bulwarks. A second and a third followed; then, for a few seconds, there was a comparatively smooth sea.

"Starboard your helm!" he shouted to the helmsman, "bowse that sheet aft and bowse it taut!" The men who stood ready at the sheet



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hailed with a will. "Hook the tackle on the clew and bowse it almost amidships! Keep the helm two and a half points to loo'ard!" The orders snapped out like the discharge of a rapid-fire gun.

As if by magic, the *Lapwing* swung up almost exactly into the wind, but just enough off to keep a headway of about two knots. But as the hours wore on and the pitiless wind increased, Martin ordered the schooner's bow as fairly into the eye of the wind as the helmsman could jam it. Accordingly, with all sail taken in but the double-reefed foresail, the *Lapwing* pointed her bowsprit as straight toward the running seas as the wheelmen could keep her. Hour after hour the little schooner staggered up mountainous seas and plunged into volleys of boiling foam, and the constant roaring of wind and water stunned every man into silence.

During the greater part of the day Captain Tomlinson kept the deck, but, having noticed the tone in which Miles had thanked him for his offer of help, he kept forward where he would not appear to be on hand for giving advice. Miles observed that he had not been aft since the storm broke.

"Captain Tomlinson!" he shouted against the storm as he picked his way along the reeling deck.



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"Aye, Mr. Gadsden," he replied, going to meet him.

"You were kind enough to offer your help once. I need it desperately now!"

"You need the help of every man on board," was the answer, "but I think you are doing all that can be done now, except that your negro giant would be a good man to keep at the wheel."

Herk's presence gave needed rest to two tired men, but even he was unable to hold the wheel alone, for the gale increased with every moment. Darkness came on early with a terrible wind and seas that every now and then smothered the deck. A sudden shift of the wind to the southeast about midnight raised a cross sea which made matters worse. Still, the *Lapwing* held herself together staunchly, and as Tomlinson found that there was comparatively little water as yet in her hold, he expressed the cheerful opinion that she would weather the gale yet.

"Take a turn in for a few minutes, Mr. Gadsden," he shouted in Miles's ear after a night-long watch. "I'll keep the deck with Martin; it's only an hour before dawn, and you can't help matters by staying here."

"Thank you," said Miles, and his face looked old and drawn in the light of the binnacle, "but my



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place as commander of this vessel in weather like this is on deck. If we go down, I'll go down at my station."

"The lad is right," muttered the sailing master; and for the next hour nothing was said. It was no time for conversation. More than once the wheelmen came near being swept away, and, indeed, one of the English sailors was saved only by his good fortune in being carried bodily against the fore-shrouds, to which he clung for dear life. Fortunately, however, the dread cry, "Man overboard," was not raised that night.

Just as the glimmer of dawn made the lanterns burn pale, Miles saw a huge wave with curling crest running toward the vessel on her port bow. A cry arose, "Hold hard!" and the helmsmen threw their whole weight on the wheel, but in vain. Crash! The tons of water smashed on the schooner's side like an avalanche, sending her on her beam ends. Fortunately, her foresail split, and she righted herself with a staggering effort. Miles found himself clutching desperately to a stay, while the boiling surge roared over his head and swept him off his feet.

When he had shaken the water out of his eyes he saw that the stanchions on the port side had been



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crushed and bent, all the boats were smashed or carried away, part of the lee bulwarks had been torn away bodily, and there was a yawning hole in the deck where the planks had been broken in.

Immediately he sent a man to sound the water in the hold. "Four foot, sir, but most of it came from topsides," he reported.

"There's a lot of tarred canvas in the forward storehold," said Tomlinson to Miles, "which we can nail over this broken plank sheer while another crew mans the pumps."

"Good! call away your Englishmen for the canvas, and I'll attend to the pumps." Miles picked his men for the pumps, and, in order to encourage them by his example, he was the first to bend his back, and sent the water spouting with a will. As the wheel of the pump clattered round and round under his arms, he thought over all that he could remember of what he had read or heard of handling ships in a gale. He knew well enough that another such wave would send the *Lapwing* to the bottom.

"If we only had a barrel or two of sperm oil," said Tomlinson, "we could smooth out some of these seas, but we haven't more than a gallon. We've got to keep her head on somehow."

Suddenly Miles recalled the description of a West



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Indian hurricane that Captain Barney had experienced and weathered, among the many tales he had listened to from that redoubtable sailor. Barney had saved his ship, he said, by a sea anchor of his own devising. Could Miles remember what that was? For a few moments he cudgeled his brains as never before in his life.

"Eureka!" he exclaimed suddenly; and, ordering another man to his place at the pumps, he hurried aft as fast as he could make his way.

"Martin," he cried, "we'll rig a sea anchor!"

"A sea anchor, sir?" was the perplexed reply, "there ain't none on board. A sea anchor is a canvas cone bent to a big iron ring—I——"

"We don't need that kind," broke in Miles. "Captain Barney told me that he saved his vessel in a hurricane once by simply running a spar forward and spanning it to the foremast."

"Aye, aye, sir. It's worth trying."

"Jones," shouted Miles to one of the men, and his voice had the ring of decision, "unlash that square-sail boom! You fellows," to the men at the wheel, "keep her head up as you value your lives, while we get this rigged. It's our last chance."

All hands that could be spared, including Captain Tomlinson, made their way forward as best



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they could and bent their energies to the task. It was only with the greatest difficulty that they got the heavy spar properly lashed and hove outboard, for every man had to grip hard and brace himself with each wave to keep from being swept away. Finally, the work was done and the spar lay on the water across the ship's bow. It was a simple contrivance; near each end of the spar a hawser was bent and made fast to a third, which was spanned to the foremast.

The effect was miraculous from the first. Not only did the spar on which the *Lapwing* swung serve to keep her head pointed fairly into the wind, but it also broke the waves that had hitherto been flooding her fore and aft. Now she rode the seas like a gull, and a few minutes later the crew at the pumps gave a cheer when they found that they were beginning to gain on the water in the hold.

"I congratulate you with all my heart, Mr. Gadsden," said Tomlinson. "We're safe now, thanks to your Yankee sea anchor. By the way, the men are pretty much worn out now and I happen to know of a barrel of good Jamaica below decks——"

Miles took the hint, and dispatched Herk below to prepare some hot toddy. A few moments later, Englishmen and Yankees were drinking each other's



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health in tin cups of steaming grog. Miles told off some of the crew to get some sleep and then for the first time in many hours went below himself for dry clothing. Arriving on deck, he sat down in the lee of the cabin house on a coil of rope, intending to watch the storm out. But when Tomlinson came up after a couple of hours' rest, he found the lad sound asleep where he sat. Sending Martin below, he stood watch himself till noon.



## CHAPTER IX

### A PRISONER OF WAR

**A**S eight bells struck, Miles awoke, greatly mortified to find that he had slept at all.

"Storm's pretty well blowed out, sir," said Martin, coming aft to relieve Captain Tomlinson, and Miles jumped to his feet, rubbing his eyes. As he looked about, he saw that though the seas were still running high, the wind had abated and the sun was struggling through the clouds.

"I think," the sailing master added, "we can make sail in another hour or so."

Accordingly, early in the afternoon, they fished inboard the sea anchor and took the wind with a double-reefed mainsail. Miles sent the lookout to the foretop to make out if he could find the whereabouts of the *Comet*, but she was nowhere to be seen. The following day, when Miles took his bearings, he discovered that the *Lapwing* had blown nearly a hundred miles from her course.



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Still, Miles felt that if he could dodge the blockading fleet on the American coast, he would yet keep his promise to Captain Boyle and bring the *Lapwing* into port with flying colors.

About noon the following day the lookout reported a sail to windward.

"Looks like a sloop of war or a privateer," remarked Martin, critically eying the strange bark through the glass, "an' I believe, sir, a Britisher."

Miles crowded on sail and tried to run before the wind. But the stranger had evidently noticed the tactics of the *Lapwing*, for she altered her course also, and soon was clearly in chase; whereupon Miles ordered the English sailors below deck.

"If we could only rig another fore-topsail, I think we could beat her," observed Martin to Miles when the enemy was seen to be gaining. Together they ransacked the *Lapwing's* stores, but nowhere could they find a spar that could be rigged as a topmast. Miles gritted his teeth in rage as he reflected what that rash order of a few days ago was likely to cost him. Every stitch of available canvas was spread on the little schooner, but she pounded along ploddingly, while the enemy gained with every minute. It was soon clear that capture was only a mat-



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ter of time, though Miles continued to hope against hope.

By sundown Miles could see the open ports along the pursuing ship's side. A little later, the red flag of England went flapping to the gaff, a puff of white showed at her bow, followed by a muffled "boom," and a shot tore across the *Lapwing's* bow, carrying away her jib stays.

It would have been suicidal for Miles to have delayed surrender, helpless as he was, and reluctantly he ordered the *Lapwing* into the wind. Soon the Britisher was shortening sail to await a boat which Miles was compelled to send aboard. His captor proved to be the British privateer *Dolphin*, of 12 guns. Miles remembered his careless guarantee to Captain Boyle, and the picture he had made for himself of his sailing up the Patapsco in his prize, with flags flying and perhaps guns booming a welcome from Fort McHenry, as he showed the Stars and Stripes over the English Union Jack.

"Good-by, Mr. Gadsden," said Captain Tomlinson to Miles as the latter stood at the gangway, "again it's the fortune of war. I sincerely hope we shall meet again, lad."

Miles did not dare trust his voice to speak and turned his head away to conceal the tears of morti-



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fication in his eyes. He pressed Tomlinson's hand and stepped silently into the cutter in which he and his crew were to be conveyed to the privateer as prisoners of war. As Herk came down the ladder the British tars sized him up in open-mouthed wonder.

"Step light there, nigger," cried the coxswain. "You'll capsize us if you ain't careful!"

"Yassir," was the answer, "jest trim her a little, and I'll walk her lak a cat."

Herk kept his promise and Miles's three sailors followed, apparently not much disturbed that the fortunes of war should have turned them from a homeward cruise to prospects of an English prison. They looked with interest at the faces crowding the bulwarks of the sloop as they approached her side, and one of them, Briscoe by name, called out boldly, "Is this your first prize, my bullies?" A laugh ran along the line, and a young fellow balanced on the foreyard answered, "No, nor the last one, either! Your little tub'll do for a bit of flotsam, though!"

"A tub she is," was the quick retort. "They told us she was English built when we took her in."

This sally brought another laugh from the tars along the rail, but Miles noticed that the English captain relaxed not a whit. This seemed a bad



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omen, and as Miles stepped aboard he was still more unfavorably impressed by the unbending manner of the privateer's commanding officer. Formality was to be expected, but the curtness with which he and his men were disposed of seemed to promise harsh treatment or at least but little liberality aboard ship. Herk found an opportunity to say in a hoarse whisper, "I'd sho' give a heap to see de *Comet* come at dis yer ship! Yah! yah!" Then he went off chuckling, with a crowd of the sailors following, delighted to have such a strange and entertaining animal aboard.

"You will deliver your arms to Mr. Cooper there. He will take you to your quarters," said the captain, and he turned on his heel and gave the order to make sail. Miles was taken in charge by a pompous young officer who showed him his quarters. They were in a secluded part of the berth deck, not very pleasantly situated, but not quite as cramped and uncomfortable as the seamen's accommodations in the forecastle. About him were quartered the warrant officers, such as the quartermaster, purser, gunner, master at arms, and boatswain. Herk, Martin, and the seamen were below in the cable tier, making themselves as comfortable as they could among the water casks and the cordage. There they found



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twelve other American sailors from the *Claudia*, a Baltimore clipper captured the week before.

These seamen were allowed but half an hour's liberty every day for air and exercise, but Miles was given the freedom of the ship, together with Captain Elmer Beard, who had commanded the unfortunate clipper.

This privilege meant a great deal, as Miles found it intolerable below decks. The warrant officers, with the exception of the gunner, who took a fancy to Miles, were very disagreeable and offensive neighbors. As rough at least as any of the *Comet's* crew, they took delight in humiliating the two Americans in every conceivable way. Beard was a man of near middle age and rather slight in physique. As a former commander, he disdained to exchange repartee with his rough neighbors or to do more than bear his hardships with dignity. They found much more fun in battling an impulsive boy like Miles. They liked to see him flush with anger and struggle to restrain his desire to be revenged on his tormentors.

One night things came to a head. The quartermaster, who was the ringleader of the persecutors, came down from watch duty at midnight. With him he brought a large skid of the filthiest slops that could be put together in the ship's galley, and this



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he laid under Miles's hammock. Then he deftly cut the hammock lashing so that the sleeper dropped fairly into the messy water.

As Miles struggled out dripping and still dazed with the fall, he saw the grinning faces of his tormentors, and the quartermaster beside him, laughing like a hyena.

"Get a swab and clean up this mess you've made, you Yankee whelp!" he shouted as Miles gained his feet.

"Here's one, girlie," cried the boatswain, extending it to the boiling youngster. "Mop it up tidy now!"

"I wish you were gentlemen, so that I could challenge you—one and all," Miles said, his voice unsteady with rage, "but I will clean up—for you——"

Here he picked up the skid with such of its contents as still remained and before the quartermaster could duck, he hurled it fairly into his face. Then, quick as a flash, he seized the long-handled swab and dipping it into the puddle on the deck under the hammock, thrust it viciously into the faces of as many as he could reach unawares. In a half minute the steerage was a pandemonium. Every man was tumbling out of his hammock, the quartermaster



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jumped to his feet sputtering slops and oaths together. Beard sprang up, throwing off his usual silent disdain of his surroundings, and stood by Miles with fists clenched.

“Come, get behind my hammock!” he called, taking in the situation. The two got behind the hammock where they were protected by a corner on one flank and a pile of sea chests on the other. They leaped back just in time to avoid the charge of the quartermaster, who went for Miles like a mad bull. Beard checked him by snatching one of the lanterns off its hook and smashing it on that officer’s skull. The others came on so fast that they got in each other’s way, and the hammock kept them from overwhelming the two prisoners in the corner. As they tumbled over one another, trying to get the hammock down, Miles jabbed frantically with his swab and Beard threw everything within reach, from a pair of boots to a heavy block, into the faces of their assailants.

The end, however, could not be doubtful. In another minute the hammock was cut down, the gang rushed forward—when, suddenly, two brawny figures came fighting their way through the group and roaring a volley of oaths and orders. It was the gunner and the master at arms. Attacked thus by their



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messmates in the rear, the attacking party paused in their tracks, though not before Captain Beard lay senseless with a bleeding forehead from a return blow of the tackle block, and Miles's swab was snapped off short in his hands, while his two arms were pinioned back into the corner by the quartermaster.

"Avast there!" admonished the gunner, handing the quartermaster a cuff on the side of the head.

The latter dropped Miles and turned savagely with a blow that the gunner neatly countered.

"Avast, both of ye!" shouted the master at arms, "or the first luff will be down and disrate every one of you!"

The master at arms is the ship's policeman, and while this one had no especial love for the two Yankees, he had a professional pride in keeping the ship orderly. The two men slunk back into their hammocks and the master at arms turned in also. "Pipe down!" he warned. "Though if you two have anything to say, man to man, say it quick!" This to the quartermaster and gunner who still faced each other with hostile looks.

"Aye, I'll say this," spoke up the burly gunner, "I'm sick of seeing you bullies pickin' on this boy. He's fought you all like a man to-night, and the next



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man that wants to make trouble with him will make trouble with me, d'ye hear?" This was said for the benefit of all, but the speaker's eye was fixed on the quartermaster. "Want any more fight?" he added, stepping nearer. He overtopped his man by four inches, and the latter can be excused perhaps for retiring as he did at discretion, by postponing the fight "till another time."

Meanwhile, Miles and Captain Beard—who had come to after a dash of water—washed their bloody hands and faces and turned in.

The gunner was as good as his word. He championed the cause of the prisoners, and the other men, being true English in their appreciation of pluck, thereafter left Miles and Captain Beard alone.

Miles, who was naturally of a frank, friendly disposition, soon became a favorite with the kind-hearted gunner and would have made friends with all on board if he could; for he had no books, the *Dolphin* was a cramped little ship, the voyage tedious, and more companionship would have been welcomed. But he found the attitude of the officers contemptuous and forbidding. A little incident that occurred made him realize his position as prisoner very keenly. While he was chatting with the gunner who was explaining to him a new-fashioned gun-



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lock, the captain came up and said sourly, evidently designing that Miles should hear:

“See that the prisoners are kept forward of the mainmast in the future.”

The order was given to his first mate, who saluted and turned to carry out the order. Miles, however, had not waited to be ordered forward, but had turned and walked rapidly to the fore-castle. There he met Captain Beard and told him of the incident.

“Well, don’t let that worry you, Gadsden. It’ll not be long till you have a taste of real prison life under a fiend who is ten times as much of a brute as this fellow. When they send us to Dartmoor, as they probably will, you’ll have to deal with Shortland, the commandant, who is said to be the meanest hound that ever drew the breath of life.”

“That’s a jolly prospect!” laughed Miles; “let’s hope that our exchanges will come soon.”

“Hope all you like, you’ll have lots of time to spend doing that. But we may be there years, if the war lasts.”

“Speaking of exchanges, did you know that my father was captured last November? I suppose he is on his way safely home by this time, if not already back?”



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"Was your father a privateersman?"

"Yes, commanded the *Eagle* of twelve guns."

"Well, most of us sooner or later get nabbed by some man-of-war," sighed Beard dolefully, "and the worst of it is that I can't be hopeful for exchange."

"Why?"

"Because Commodore Rodgers holds a number of prisoners as hostages for the proper treatment of some Americans they threatened to hang as traitorous British subjects. Since that row, there's been no exchange."

"When was that?"

"Well, I don't know just when exchanges stopped; perhaps your father had time to get away beforehand. Let us hope so!"

"Oh, I'm sure he must have!" cried Miles, but his tone and expression were not so confident as his words.

Beard shrugged his shoulders resignedly, but said nothing; and Miles began to fear that even then his father was still lying in an English prison.

"You certainly are a Job's comforter, to-day," he laughed to Captain Beard, determined not to be discouraged till he had to. But Beard's words made him keep his eyes fixed on the horizon, hoping



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that he might see a rescuing sail. Often, during the days and weeks that followed, Miles amused Captain Beard by insisting that the day could not pass without a rescue. One morning he described the scene that would ensue if Boyle should appear with the *Comet*.

“Why not have a man like Captain Hull with the *Constitution*?” said Beard. “Wishing is cheap.”

“No, sir!” said Miles, “Captain Boyle and the *Comet* would be enough. It would take him about fifteen minutes to put the Stars and Stripes on that gaff.”

“Land ho!” came the cry from the lookout. When the boatswain passed, Miles asked what land had been sighted.

“Good old England,” was the answer. “That thar’s the Lizard.”

By nine o’clock that evening the *Dolphin* had anchored in Plymouth Harbor.



## CHAPTER X

### IN AN ENGLISH PRISON PEN

AS the anchor splashed into the dark water, Miles reflected gloomily on what might be in store for him. He looked with homesick feelings at the lights of Plymouth town as they blinked through a pouring rain. To his side came the quartermaster with an ill-tempered grin.

"Mr. Gadsden will get his kit and take it to the cutter at the gangway," he said. "All prisoners are to be taken ashore."

Miles complied as hurriedly as possible. He took his place in the boat where he found Captain Beard, Herk, and the other prisoners already seated. In the cold drizzling rain they were a dismal-looking lot.

"Good-by, Mr. Gadsden!" called the gunner standing in the fore chains waving his hat.

"Good-by," cried Miles heartily, "good luck to you!"



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"The Yankee prisoners will keep their mouths shut," said the young third mate, who was in charge of the boat, as the men gave way.

For the first time Miles realized what it meant to be a prisoner. He bowed his head in assumed humility, but said in an undertone: "I'd give a good American dollar to have that young jackanapes' head in chancery under my left arm." Captain Beard smiled and Herk guffawed in unrestrained delight.

"The next man that opens his mouth I'll have beaten over the head with an oar!" screamed the mate, but the prisoners only grinned at him in derision.

On reaching the wharf, they were turned over to the tender mercies of an army officer who stood ready to receive them. As Miles came up and gave his name on demand, the officer, whose temper was clearly spoiled by this night's duty in the rain, cursed him foully for a rebel dog. Miles's own temper was none too even after the treatment he had received. Glancing around first, he drew back and, with all his might, drove his five knuckle bones into the officer's eye. That dignitary sprawled on his back in a puddle, hitting his head on a cobblestone with such force as to make him careless of passing events.



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Fortunately, it was very dark in the street and the boat from the *Dolphin* had already started back. Miles was surrounded by his own men and the prostrate officer was not discovered for some minutes. Meanwhile Miles and his fellows had lost themselves in the herd of prisoners in the square, who had been gathered from two other ships anchored in the harbor. Apparently, nobody thought enough of the stunned officer to take the trouble of going through a batch of three hundred to find out who struck him, for, after a little waiting, the prisoners were divided into batches of about thirty each and packed into large covered wagons that stood in line in a street at one end of the square.

Then, about midnight, the processions of wagons began to move, flanked by lines of mounted infantry. Miles found himself packed in so closely that he could hardly stir. It was pitch dark and he could recognize no one about him. "Is any one here from the *Lapwing's* crew?" he asked. After a silence one of the men replied that he and his mates were from the privateer *Rattler*. At this point a sergeant thrust his head into the wagon and told the occupants to keep quiet.

Miles had hoped that Captain Beard or some of his own men would be with him, Martin, for ex-



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ample, and especially his faithful Herk, but they had become separated soon after getting into the square. The going had been terribly rough in the streets of Plymouth; but, once on the country roads, the experience was beyond description. English country roads in 1813 were almost as bad as plowed fields, and a long winter rain made the one Miles was traveling a deep slough, with sudden holes as soon as they came into the region of the moors. Miles had no idea where he was going, but the experience of that night was one he could never forget. As the springless wagons lurched, and jumped, foot by foot, their occupants were thrown against each other or against the timbered sides. Some of the prisoners were just recovering from their wounds and, naturally, in many of these cases the fearful jolting reopened the wounds. Every hour or two the line halted, and Miles could gather from what he heard that in several cases it was not only to rest the horses but to remove the bodies of those who had died, which the soldiers threw into the morass without ceremony. Nor was the roughness of the trail the only evil. A great many of the men were thinly dressed, and they lay in rain-soaked clothes cut by a wind that fringed the dripping edges of the wagon top with icicles. The men on



the outside exposed to the wind and rain suffered greatly.

"I'm goin' to drop out and die on the road," groaned one, "I've got the chills again. It's the old fever comin' back."

"Keep your heart up, lad," said the man opposite him.

"Here!" cried Miles, "I have a pea-jacket on and you can crawl in here amidships where you'll get warm. I'll sit outside. Make way for us, men!" With great difficulty, because of the jolting and lurching of the wagon, Miles crawled out of his place and got the fever-stricken sailor in his seat.

"Thankee, sir, it's my brother," said the other man simply. He was a big Gloucesterman with a voice like a foghorn. The guard called for silence again and the cart load jolted on without another word.

The cold rain turned to sleet which stung Miles's face like needles; masses of his hair clotted with ice, and he had to slap his fingers and thighs to keep from becoming utterly numb. It was hard to avoid despair, with nothing to look forward to at the end of this awful trip but an equally awful prison. Clearly, the same thought weighed down the heads



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of all the poor wretches around him, for nothing but suppressed groans and muttered curses were heard the whole night through.

“If we could only talk or sing—something could be done to cheer up the fellows,” thought Miles, seeing by the early gray of dawn the drooping figures beside him. As for himself, he kept up his spirits by the recollection of the blow he had dealt the foul-mouthed officer in Plymouth. His teeth chattered and he was cramped and sore, but he managed to grin every time he saw, in his mind’s eye, that sprawling figure, and heard the “smack” of his fist against the pudgy face.

The ride to Dartmoor from Plymouth covers only fifteen miles, but from the long hours spent on the road it seemed to Miles more than fifty. Finally, at dawn of that winter morning, Miles saw from his outside perch the forlorn destination.

Imagine a circular pen—a mile in circumference—with three walls containing a dozen prison yards and some stone buildings. Around the walls lay the treacherous swamps of the moor, shut in by low hills. Not a tree—not a house—the dreariest prospect imaginable in the drizzling rain.

“Get out, and be quick about it!”

They were now in the yard. At the order the



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men tried to follow both instructions, but in some cases were not even able to move. About twenty-five were carried direct to the hospital under the directions of the surgeon; the rest climbed out slowly and painfully. Miles, stiff and sore with cramps and bruises, could barely walk; but he was stimulated to do his best by a prick of a bayonet in the calf of his leg.

He soon found himself herded into a yard that was surrounded by a high stone wall and contained a prison house. A turnkey met the batch and, with small ceremony, shoved the men into the quarters they were to occupy. Miles, with a few others, was bundled into a barrack room on the fourth floor. A dirty straw mattress was assigned to him.

"Don't you have different quarters for officers?" asked Miles.

"What are you?" replied the turnkey curtly.

"Midshipman on the privateer *Comet*."

"Privateer?" sneered the official, "if we had a worse room you'd get it. '*Midshipman* on a privateer!'" and he laughed scornfully.

"Who's this young cockerel that don't want to mess with us?" growled a big prisoner. "You'd think we was niggers, to hear him talk."



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“ Oh, dry up, you bilgy swab ! ” roared a voice, before Miles could formulate a defense. “ Don’t you know cabin from fo’c’sle ? ”

Miles turned with surprise to hear a voice in his behalf and recognized the Gloucesterman with whose sick brother he had exchanged places on the trip to the prison. Miles gave him a look of gratitude, and said after an effort at self-control, “ I meant no offense, and I don’t want to quarrel with a fellow-countryman.”

The bully who hoped to wreak his ill-nature on the lad evidently changed his mind when he looked on Miles’s burly defender, for he “ dried up,” as requested.

Never had Miles felt so depressed as he did this first day in Dartmoor prison. It was hard enough to look out on high walls, the five gates between the cell and liberty—and then, beyond, the treacherous bogs, which would probably finish whoever escaped the muskets of the sentinels. But he knew that the war must end some time, and that would mean liberty. The wearing part was the conditions of the prison life which had to be endured meanwhile.

Miles soon learned, that by some official dishonesty, clothing and fuel had not been supplied to



the prisoners during that winter. He himself, expecting to dry his clothes on getting to Dartmoor, had to be content with having his clothes dry on his body the day after his arrival. Others less robust, and with fewer clothes than he, suffered terribly. The hospital was so crowded that those who were not desperately ill were treated in their quarters. The men tried to keep warm during those raw February days by all kinds of rough labor and games in their pens during the day and by crowding close together at night.

But the cold was for Miles the least evil. He was herded with the roughest sailors, many of whom, after long imprisonment, had given up the effort to keep clean. Many of these were the scum of the various seaport towns, who had gone privateering for sheer love of booty, and were kept in subjection only by the fact that the majority of the prisoners represented a better element. Miles learned that at first some of these ruffians turned so savagely on their own officers who were imprisoned with them that the British soldiers had to be sent in to the rescue. Shortly before Miles saw Dartmoor, a better class of men were brought in, most of them men who, having been impressed on British men-of-war, had refused to fight against their country and chosen



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imprisonment instead. These organized a rough constitution and court of justice to keep order among the whole body of prisoners.

It was lucky for Miles, however, that he had won the friendship of the big Gloucesterman, for his roommates were only held in check by the fisherman's tremendous fist. After one or two brief bouts with his champion, Miles's neighbors left the boy alone. In a sense, Miles could avoid contact with the vile characters he herded with, but there was no avoiding the physical uncleanness of the place. Foul air, foul bedding and quarters, and indescribable vermin made him wonder at first if he shouldn't go crazy before a week of it was over.

Two or three days after Miles's arrival, the exposure and rough food laid him on his back almost sicker in mind than body. It was then that he learned to appreciate the character of Doctor McGrath, the prison surgeon. When he discovered Miles's condition, after administering his medicine, he chatted in the most friendly and cheerful way imaginable, told some funny stories of the prisoners, and left him feeling that there was, after all, one friendly heart even among the prison authorities. Others besides Miles blessed the hard-working sur-



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geon, but for whose constant labor and contagious good spirits many a poor fellow would have gone under in despair.

When Miles was finally told by Doctor McGrath that he was well enough to dispense with a physician's attendance, he was actually sorry to hear the news, as the doctor's visits had been the only bright spots in those dreary weeks. But, as he remembered the miseries of those around him, he felt ashamed of even a moment's selfishness and determined that as soon as he was a little stronger he would try to emulate the cheery doctor in his work of brightening the lives of the wretches about him.

On regaining his feet, Miles took a careful survey of his prison. The circular space, containing about eight acres, was divided off into three big partitions by diagonal walls, with a so-called "market place" in the middle. Seven prison buildings with smaller inclosures led off from this open place in the center. The whole was inclosed by a twenty-foot wall, on the top of which sentries paced with loaded muskets. During the day the prisoners had considerable freedom within the walls, and could pass and repass through the little connecting gateways from one prison house to another or into the "market place." In fact, all hands were turned into this for



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exercise from eleven in the morning to two in the afternoon. At night, however, there were sentries at every gateway and no intercourse was allowed between the different prison houses.

As Doctor McGrath explained the system to Miles, the latter cheered up a good deal, for he felt that there was nothing to prevent his finding Herk, Captain Beard, the prize crew of the *Lapwing*, and perhaps even his father.

When he went into the market place for the first time, Miles went patiently looking here and there through the thousands of prisoners who were stirring hither and thither like a swarm of ants in an ant hill. Every once in a while he would catch a face that suggested a remembrance only to be disappointed. None of his neighbors or friends had ever seen Mr. Gadsden, and Miles, between disappointment at not seeing his father and relief at deciding that he must be safe in Annapolis, gave up the search. Accordingly, he wrote a long letter home, telling of his plight. This letter he was able to forward through the kindness of Doctor McGrath, in whose care the answer was to be sent. Miles, though he had written home whenever he could send a line, had never been where a letter could reach him, and was homesick for news of his family.



"Is Gadsden a common name?" queried the doctor, scanning the address on Miles's letter.

"No; why do you ask?"

"Why, there was a man here—a man far above the ordinary run of privateer captains—a special case held for trial— Why, what's the matter?"

"Was it my father—what was the trouble?" burst in Miles, afire with anxiety.

The good doctor put on his gold-rimmed spectacles and surveyed the lad's features carefully. Then he coughed——

"Tell me, quick!" cried Miles.

"Well," responded the other slowly, "I shouldn't be surprised if it was your father—I see a resemblance now, but don't worry about him; he's all right, I'm sure. There was some question raised about his—er—papers—or something—involved trouble for the prize-court lawyers, you know, and they had to have him at the hearing—or something. Now, don't you get to worrying, my lad," and the kindly old man laid an affectionate hand on the boy's shoulder.

Miles had no words because he felt confused. There was something about Doctor McGrath's vagueness and halting way of talking, after Miles's exclamation, that left a feeling of dread in the boy's heart.



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The doctor refused to discuss the subject further, stowed Miles's letter away in a capacious pocket and made off toward the superintendent's quarters.

Miles sat down on a stone step and pondered. "There's something wrong—badly wrong about father," he said to himself; "I don't believe he's exchanged at all, and he's in trouble somewhere."

While looking for his father, Miles had succeeded in finding the three sailors from his old crew. Briscoe and Captain Beard were found the first day that Miles was able to creep out into the yard, and he soon rounded up Martin and Jackson, the other two members of the *Lapwing's* crew. Herk was nowhere to be found, Briscoe reported. "If the nigger was in the square," said he, "I could spy him as easy as I could sight the main skysail of 'Old Ironsides' in a fleet of oyster boats."

After the big fisherman from Gloucester and his brother were added to the group, Miles suggested that they make a point of meeting each day at the spot where they then stood so as to keep in touch with each other, and to keep up their spirits. The place selected was the corner of the square farthest from the agent's house which stood at one end of the inclosure and here many interesting little meetings were held. It was more than a month before Miles



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found Herk, who had been pressed into service as a house servant by Major Shortland, the prison commandant. Thereafter, at intervals, the negro, also, was enabled to join the men in the "Amen Corner," as Briscoe called it. The little coterie was further increased by several others who had stirring experiences to tell, and the group whiled away the heavy hours by "swapping yarns."

Though the meetings in the Amen Corner served to make the monotonous life a little less irksome, still the months that were spent in the crowded vermin-infested pen were even more galling to Miles than to most of the others. Besides the miserable fare, the filth and the rags of his prison life, there was the monotony of confinement. Youth rebels at inaction or loss of liberty and, as old Todd had hinted to him soon after the commencement of the *Comet's* cruise, patience was not Miles's most prominent virtue. Since the day of his entering the prison gates he had tried to devise some possibility of escape, but no way seemed open to even the faintest hope of success. England had always seemed to him a small country, a mere island that could almost have been placed in the boundaries of some of the plantations in the States. But now, as he caught a glimpse of the desolate waste that stretched to the



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horizon on every side, he felt that England was a vast, even a limitless, continent. Sometimes so impressed did he become with the hopelessness of ever crossing the unending expanse of moors and bogs, even should he manage to get clear of the prison walls, that for weeks he would cease to plan and even forget to think of escape. But there came a time, after a long period of resignation to fate, when the horrors of the place were so impressed upon him that he made a mental vow never to cease his efforts to breathe the air of freedom.

Webb, the impressed sailor, had many discouraging tales to tell of men who had gained the freedom of the moors only to find that they had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. He found that most of those who had been in the prison long enough to know much of the conditions surrounding them considered it useless to attempt to cross the hills and moors without a guide and outside aid. Miles was determined, however, that he would make the effort, as the prison life was intolerable. He would rather starve and die alone on the lonesome moor, or in the mire of the horrible bogs Webb had told him of, than endure the miseries of Dartmoor. Given freedom, too, he felt that he could solve the mystery of his father's fate. No news of his father had been



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received at Annapolis, he learned from a letter that Doctor McGrath delivered one day. It was from his sister Deborah and served to further depress his spirits. While he was counting the weary hours of imprisonment, others were gaining honor in the glorious fight for America and for freedom. He longed to feel again the deck of a good ship beneath his feet, and he said to himself that if he could have a good steel blade in his hands, he could chop his way through the crew of the biggest English ship of the line to where his father might be, even now, lying in irons. So each day he tried to add a little to his store of the sort of knowledge that might be of use when the crucial moment came.

He studied the guard system of the prison, he tried to establish himself on a friendly footing with the sentinels, and he endeavored to gain a thorough knowledge of the plan of all that part of the prison through which he might have to pass to gain the outside wall. Then he sought out and questioned two men who had escaped but had been recaptured. From them he learned little worth knowing. Next, he decided to make the acquaintance of the teamsters who drove the wagons that brought in the prisoners. They, of course, knew the roads and might be induced to let fall some useful hints as to the topog-



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raphy of the country. Herk, in the meantime, had become a sort of trusty and was allowed many privileges. His race and his great stature make him a marked man and little fear of his escape was entertained. Through him Miles managed to meet one of the wagon drivers but, lest suspicion be excited, was compelled to make his efforts to extract information with extreme caution. He spent weeks of valuable time in tactfully leading his man to talk on the desired subject before he felt that he had pumped him dry. At last he decided that he was on the point of exciting the man's distrust and so gradually dropped the matter.

He concluded that now he was ready to take up plans as to the direct means of escape from the prison, as he was confident that, once free of its restraining walls, he should be able to find a way to reach the coast.

The discouraging part of the situation was that, as far as Miles had been able to find out, no one had ever succeeded in getting away. There had been many attempts, but every case had been disastrous; about a dozen had been killed by the muskets of the sentinels, the others had tasted the pleasures of the "black hole" on bread and water for ten days.

The terrors of the moors he felt that he could



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risk, for he told himself that much of its reputation was due to the attempt of the authorities to discourage the prisoners from trying to escape.

He had not long thought seriously of getting free before remembering the stories that Captain Barney used to tell of Lieutenant Dale's escape from Mill Prison during the Revolutionary War. This he had effected by means of the uniform of a British officer. How Dale got that uniform he never would tell, but the more Miles thought of it the more it struck him as the best means of escape, especially as it would stand him in good stead, not only as a disguise, but as a protection outside of the prison walls and in trying to get across the Channel.



## CHAPTER XI

### PLANNING AN ESCAPE

SEVERAL things favored Miles's purpose as to means of egress from the building in which he was confined at night. A large part of the wall of the prison below his window was sheltered by one of the diagonal walls, and all of it lay in shadow at night, for the yard lantern was around the corner. His window was barred, but the bars were loose, and it would be easy for a light, agile fellow like him, if he had a rope, to slide down sixty feet to the ground unobserved in the darkness. About this time, too, came a fresh consignment of clothing for the soldiers of the garrison, many of whom threw away here and there a tattered coat, although such carelessness was against orders. Miles, by the judicious use of a little money, succeeded in getting hold of a scarlet coat and a pair of leggings, which he concealed in his kit box. Others of the prisoners who were bold enough to



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wear what they picked up were soon forced to give them up and were punished for their temerity besides. Miles waited vainly to get hold of a greatcoat. His own pea-jacket would never do as a disguise, and without one he saw no possibility of passing the five sentinels which he had learned were between him and liberty.

Each day when 5,000 prisoners were turned into the market square, Miles had an opportunity to meet Herk, whom he hoped to have as his companion should an opportunity for a dash for freedom come. He did not dare to confide in the negro, whose intelligence was, of course, not of the highest order. "Besides," he thought, "a secret is no longer a secret when it is shared." Miles saw Herk almost every day and took care to caution him not to say or do anything that would call attention to the fact that they knew more of each other than any other two of the thousands about them. After laying his plans, he saw to it that Herk never visited the "Amen Corner," and tried to make it appear that his interest in the black fellow differed in no wise from that of the others who were attracted by him as by a sort of freak of nature. The negro's position of general servant to the agent gave him special freedom in coming and going outside the walls, for Shortland



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knew that he would never be able to thread his way across the moors alone, and would have no idea where to go. But Herk had enough native cunning to make use of his liberty by picking up or stealing odd bits of rope unobserved, which he managed to smuggle into the yard and into Miles's hands. These Miles spliced and knotted, in shipshape fashion, into one rope, long and strong enough, by the end of several weeks' work, to serve as a means of escape from the window to the ground.

Being unwilling to trust anyone with his plan, he was careful to work only when the others were asleep, making use of the light from the yard lanterns. Then he coiled up the rope into the smallest possible compass and stowed it in his kit, waiting until he could complete his uniform before making his attempt. Miles had learned a good deal by his rough experiences and was determined not to take unnecessary chances when there was so much at stake. Herk finally appeared, one September afternoon, unusually stout-looking under his rough frieze coat. When Miles found a good chance, he quickly unwound from the negro's waist the long-awaited for greatcoat, which he needed to hide his own non-uniform breeches.

“Bully! How did you get it, Herk?”



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“Marse Miles, I knowed you was waitin’ an’ a-waitin’, and I kain’t find nuthin’. Dese col’ nights nobody throws warm coats away. So I goes out on de road las’ night where de soldiers’ tavern is an’ I waits tell ’bout midnight when I knowed I kin fin’ somebody drunk, an’ sho’ nuff I fin’s a sojer layin’ by de road, an’ I just peels his coat an’ hat off. Dey’s bofe good as new.” And Herk produced a “shako” from some mysterious recess of his clothes.

“Herk, you’re worth your weight in gold—and that’s saying a lot in your case—but move off while I sneak up to my room with these things. Be back here in fifteen minutes.” Though Miles did not realize it, there was no very close inspection of the doings of the prisoners, on account of the seeming impossibility of their escape, so that a good deal of his cautioning was probably not necessary. At any rate, no sentry observed his getting away with a bundle of clothing under his arm up into his room in the prison house.

Now the problem was to get the countersign. The sentry at the gate was a fresh-faced young countryman who was performing his militia duty with very ill grace. Miles had settled on him for his purpose, for he had frequently stood guard there



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and the American had had some little conversation with him on his previous duty at this post. Miles had planned to wait till a dark, stormy night should arrive, but the chance to get at this rebellious young fellow was too good to lose. When he came up, the militiaman was leaning on his musket before the sentry box, watching a couple of prisoners who were wrestling for a bet. There was a good deal of noisy hilarity and Miles was able to speak to the sentry without its being noticed.

“Want to make a good bit of money?” said he in a low tone.

“How?”

“I’ll give you four guineas for the countersign and never betray you.”

“Gimme five,” was the crafty response.

“I have only four, and can’t get any more,” said Miles; “take it or leave it—it’s easy money.”

The sentry rubbed his head, perplexed. “You don’t love Shortland, do you?” said the other, knowing that the superintendent had had the man flogged for some trifling offense.

“No, blast the brute!—I’m your man. Bring me the cash to-night at six when I go off duty an’ you’ll get the word.”

Miles had kept a quantity of gold pieces in his



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money belt where he had had them since leaving the *Comet*. It was more than four guineas, but he felt sure that he could buy the countersign for that, and knew that the rest would be needed afterwards. Of course, he had to trust to the honesty of the sentry not to betray him, but he felt he could risk it.

“Herk,” he said to the waiting negro, “watch for me to-night under those dwarf cedars outside the walls. Bring what eatables you can in your pocket. If you keep on grinning like that some one will get suspicious.

At six the sentry was ready with his countersign—“Wellington”—and Miles slipped the coins into the open palm behind his back. For once the young Yankee blessed the habits of English weather, for by sundown the skies were leaden and a few pattering drops promised a dark, rainy night. The minutes seemed hours as he waited and watched. His companions, one after another, dropped asleep and lay snoring around him. A half hour before midnight. Miles unwound his rope, bent one end to an iron bolt in the stone wall near the window, and slowly paid out the rest. Then, waiting till the sentry passed the corner, he dropped the great-coat and stealthily climbed out. Catching the rope, he went down slowly from knot to knot.



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It was no easy task. Having been six or seven months off the deck of a ship, his hands had grown tender and, as any noise would have been fatal to his success, he had to make his descent almost inch by inch down the sixty feet of rope; so it was a painful journey. Once on the ground, he pulled on the coat, settled the hat well over his eyes, and awaited his chance.

Just as twelve o'clock struck, there was a tramp of feet as a corporal's guard came up to change sentinels. Miles slipped by, in the confusion of shifting, and no one even challenged him. He marched ahead without hesitation. On getting to the second gate, the sentry challenged him but did not go farther than the door of his box. Miles turned aside, whispered the countersign and was off in a moment. The same experience was met with at the three remaining gateways till he found himself out on the moors, for the first time since that dismal February morning so long ago. Free again!

He drew a deep breath.

"I'll be shot before I'll let 'em take me back!" he whispered to himself, and pushed on in haste to meet Herk. There was no time to lose, for if the dangling rope were found, or some overzealous sentry reported his suspicions, there would be a hue



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and cry that would spoil everything. The night was black enough to suit any escaping prisoner, so black that he could not see the road and dared not try to run for fear of breaking his legs in some of the deep holes and ruts. Once he fell headlong in the mire. But soon the three cedars loomed black against the sky, and he heard the welcome words in a loud whisper:

“Dat you, Marse Miles?”

“Yes, all ready?”

“Ready, sah.”

“Herk, don’t you ever let anyone take me back there; I’d rather die free, I believe, than go back alive.”

“Dunno ’bout dat, Marse Miles, but I sholy is glad to git loose. Whar we gwine?”

“Follow the road till we hit the coast and then pick up a boat, if we can, and cross the Channel to France.”

“All right, sah!” Herk would have responded as trustingly if Miles had explained that he intended to sail for the moon. And the pair struck off through the darkness for freedom.



## CHAPTER XII

### ACROSS THE MOORS

MILES was eager to cover as much ground as possible before daylight and followed Herk's long strides for a good half hour before anything of interest happened. The going had been rough and the heavy coat he was wearing decidedly burdensome, but the fact that they were leaving their pursuers behind repaid him for any creature discomforts, and he plodded along more than satisfied with the results of the night.

"Boom!"

The sound came from the direction of the prison, and Miles knew that his escape had been discovered.

"That means they're starting after us, Herk! Move along lively!" urged Miles.

"Yassir! Don't need to put no spurs to dis boy. We'll dess natchally burn de wind. Dis yere's de time ter hit de grit!" With that he set out at a lively gait that soon wore out Miles,



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weighted down as he was. The night was chilly, and Miles would have hated to throw away the heavy greatcoat even if he had not valued it so highly as a disguise. He slowed Herk down to a dog trot and, finally, to a walk.

When they had traversed a distance that Miles estimated to be about a league, he heard a startled "Lawdamussy!" from Herk and the indistinct bulk before him vanished. As he halted quickly he heard a splash. Then there was a series of splashes, sputters, and grunts.

"Here, Herk! This way!" he called.

"Yassir, I'se a-comin'! I'se in mud up to mah years!" and he heard Herk floundering in the bog.

Miles groped his way forward until he reached the spot where Herk had taken his plunge, and managed, finally, to reach out a hand and help him to solid ground.

"Phew! Dat's quicksands and dey mos' got me!" said the negro with chattering teeth.

"No, not quicksands," said Miles, "but mire, and that's just as bad. We must go more carefully. It's dark as pitch and we're likely to hit even a worse place if we don't pick our way. Let's try to the left."



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Before they had gone three steps they found soft ground again and turned back. When they thought they faced in their original direction, they turned to the right and were stopped by water again within a few feet. Then they started to retrace their steps, hoping to find a solid way opening off somewhere in the desired direction. It did not take them long to discover that they had passed along a narrow neck of hard ground that projected out into a bog of the worst sort. Even when at last they did discover firm ground branching away to the left of their original route, it was not long before they were at fault again and forced to turn back. This was repeated time and again till they seemed hopelessly lost and Miles had to avail himself of the stars, for by this time the clouds had broken. After locating the north star, he satisfied himself as to the right direction and again commenced the hunt for safe ground. By this time it seemed they were in a labyrinth of sloughs and puddles. Fortunately the darkness was thinning somewhat and they were able to move with a little more confidence. Miles now began to feel that they were working their way out of the most treacherous part of the bog.

“What pesters me is how wuz we cute enough to fin’ our way so far in,” said Herk. “It dess looks



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lak we knowed our way an' wuz a-trying to git as far back into troublesome lan' as we knowed how!"

"Yes, it does seem so," said Miles, "and we're losing valuable time, too. I was just thinking—hark! Listen, Herk! Did you hear that?"

"What was it? Sounded like a owl to me!" and Herk turned, hand to ear, to listen.

"Ohoo-oo-ee!" faintly sounded across the moors. Calls and shouts followed. There was no mistaking this time. It was the sound of human voices and Miles realized that the pursuers were uncomfortably near.

"We must get out of this in a hurry," he whispered excitedly, "our only hope is to keep on toward them, as we are headed now, until we are sure of our ground and then make a break for it. They're hot on the scent." Herk had taken the alarm quickly and needed no second hint. He was off before Miles had finished speaking and soon came to grief again. Miles heard him sloshing through mud and water and hurriedly called as loudly as he dared:

"This way, Herk! Come back!"

Stepping high, with a sort of string-haltered gait, Herk returned; and Miles led the way, as swiftly as he dared, along a slight upgrade that he was sure would lead them to drier ground.



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"Stay behind me," he said, "I think I am a safer pilot than you."

In a few moments he found that they were on high ground and he decided that he could at last venture to turn away from the point from which he had last heard the voices. Then a bright thought struck him.

"Herk, you can carry this heavy coat better than I can. Take it and I'll set a pace for you for a while!"

This arrangement worked well and they thought that they were gaining on their pursuers. But again came the sounds of halloos and calls, this time to the left and, it seemed to Miles, closer than before.

"They seem to be near where we had our troubles with the mire," said Miles; "I only hope they'll have as hard luck as we did!"

"'Taint no skin off'n my back if de whole kit an' bilin' uv 'em gits drownded!" chuckled Herk.

Miles was just congratulating himself on the fact that he had chosen a direction that had given them good hard turf when "swish, swish," he struck into marshy grass and came to a stop as Herk almost ran over him.

"Dah, now! Got ter swim out agin, has we?" said Herk loudly.



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"Ssh! Quiet there!" cautioned Miles; "you'll have them on our backs in a jiffy!" Herk clapped his hands to his mouth in time to smother one of his characteristic guffaws, for mishaps always meant merriment to the darky.

"Keep your hand over your mouth till I find a way out of this," whispered Miles. "One of your *quack, quack, quack* laughs would be heard clear to Dartmoor!"

Herk realized that they were in a tight place, but it did not seem to depress him for, as Miles started out, carefully feeling for solid mother earth, he heard Herk say softly to himself:

"I'se hyeard tell ob a man habbin' a hoss-laugh but I'se de fust man I ebber knowed what had a duck-laugh! Quack, quack!" Then he slapped himself on the leg and bent over with one big hand over his mouth and the other held to his side.

Suddenly Miles stopped and listened as he heard a voice out of the darkness back of them.

This time the sound was nearer and he heard the words "high ground." Then there seemed to be an answering call of inquiry and the first voice shouted: "This way—there's high ground here!" There was the gleam of a lantern and, as Miles hurried along, he looked from time to time over his



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shoulder at its tiny flame in an effort to gauge the speed and direction of the pursuing party. He soon satisfied himself that the light was following the direction he and Herk were taking and he determined to change his course. He turned sharply to the right and started at a swinging trot with Herk again at his heels. Wet turf under foot again caused him to veer more and more until he found that he had almost turned back again. Suddenly, from in front, he heard a voice dead ahead: "Wot's the trouble, Bill? Where be you a-goin'? You're turned, ain't ye?"

"Ssh!" Miles hissed to Herk; "don't say a word!" he whispered. Then quickly he called in a muffled sort of voice: "Wet ground here!" Then he caught Herk's arm and pulled him down so as to get his mouth close to the big fellow's ear. "We've got to pass him. I'm afraid to risk another turn, and besides he has heard us and will suspect something if we turn again."

"This way, Bill! Wot's the matter with yer? It's all right here!"

"Keep about five steps behind me," whispered Miles again. "Watch me and when you see that his attention is fixed on me—get at him. Mind that you don't give him a chance to cry out!"



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Miles did not wait to hear Herk's whispered "Yassir!" but stepped forward toward the spot where he still heard the man now grumbling at his supposed companion's stupidity. Miles was afraid of betraying himself by his voice and did not dare answer when the stranger complained of his "dumb blockheadedness." He coughed as hoarsely as he could as if the fit of coughing prevented him from talking and in this way gained a few moments of time. Passing off to the side of the figure that he was now able to distinguish clearly he again assumed a fit of coughing. Doubling up as if in great pain he rolled on the ground and began to groan dismally. He was careful, however, not to let his eyes leave the figure of the man and was greatly relieved when he saw him come forward with muttered exclamations of wonder. Then out of the darkness Miles saw a big, black form launch itself upon him and he knew that Herk had arrived. Springing to his feet he hurried up and saw the big black fellow strike twice and then rise to his feet.

"He's safe, Marse Miles!" he whispered hoarsely. "He won't pester us no mo'!"

"Hurry—we must get away," whispered Miles excitedly; "there they are—hardly five rods away!"



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The two fugitives crept softly forward again and soon struck ground that made Miles drop to his knees and carefully pass his hands over the earth.

"It's a road, Herk!" he said excitedly; "I thought I felt a wagon rut."

"Yassir! It sho' is! I kin see it now!"

Miles, too, saw that the line of the roadway was plain enough to follow, provided they did not move too swiftly, and he felt that they were safe from the dreaded mire at last. The pursuit had gone on and the road led in the exact direction that he calculated would take them to the south coast. He realized that great caution must be used as there was more chance of running upon danger from human enemies on the highway than on the moors. But he had had enough of bogs and mires to last a lifetime, so they trudged along with their ears keenly on the alert for suspicious sounds. When daylight approached they left the road and, taking care that they left no trail, made their way to a thick clump of bushes and stretched themselves out for an hour's badly needed rest.

When Miles woke, to his dismay he saw that the sun was at least two hours high. He had hoped to catch a cat nap and push forward until it was light enough to pick a safe place to hide during the



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daylight hours. They were close to the road and in sight of a farm house, but their hiding place was not a bad one as it was in the midst of a fallow field that had grown up in underbrush. There they spent the day and when darkness came, half-starved, they started on to the southward. This time they took a line parallel with the road and only a few yards distant from it, giving the farm house they had seen a wide berth because they had noticed there a dog that might give the alarm.

They had traveled for about an hour, without a favorable opportunity for foraging and without encountering water, when Miles heard a trickling sound in the direction of the roadside and was delighted to find a horse trough that was fed by a wooden pipe from a spring nearby. After a long, deep draught they decided to make another detour to avoid a cottage which they had sighted, when Herk almost ran into a cow that was grazing at the side of a little creek and Miles determined to stop for supper. Fortunately, the cow proved a gentle, tractable beast and while Miles held his hat Herk quickly pumped it full of rich milk. After both had refreshed themselves they pushed on and before long saw the lights of a city that they took to be Plymouth. The direction they were following would



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lead them a mile or so to the east of the town and they decided to keep to their course.

“We must strike the coast,” said Miles, “where we are not likely to be seen and then carefully work our way along until we find a boat of some sort. Our only hope is to reach France.” They were soon within the sound of the surf and after descending a steep declivity found themselves at the water’s edge. To the west, scarcely a hundred yards away, they saw a light which came from a hut on the hillside and Miles decided to reconnoiter. About fifty feet from the house they found a boat of the sort used by fishermen along the coast. It was a staunch-looking affair and Miles felt that their difficulties were over if they could launch her without detection.

“Ain’t no oars, Marse Miles!” said Herk.

“Stay here and I’ll see if I can find any. They have probably taken them up to the house. Wait here quietly and if anything happens, be ready to help.”

As Miles cautiously approached the hut he heard voices inside. As the light within was not very bright, he ventured close to the window and saw three rough-looking fishermen at a table, while a fourth lay in a bunk smoking his pipe and watching his companions dispute over a game of cards. Sat-



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isfied that the men were too much interested to leave the house for some time to come, Miles decided that he could prosecute his search without fear of interruption. But he had reckoned without his host. As he circled the shanty, he found the object of his search, but all too quickly, for he came to grief in the very moment of his success. As he turned the corner of the hut, he stumbled over the oars which had been placed against the wall, and there was a clatter that brought a barking, snapping dog from under the house, and the four men rushed out of the door. Miles was kicking at the dog and managing to keep him at a safe distance as the men appeared.

“Ho, wot’s the row ’ere?” asked one of them. “Come off, Tige! Now, my beauty”—this to Miles—“We’ll find out wot you’re up to! Bring ’em inside, mates, and we’ll see wot sort of a cove—’ead ’im off there, Bob!”

Miles had made a dash for the back of the shanty, but the dog was at his heels and he had not gone ten steps before he was on the ground with two men on top of him and two more trying to find a way to get at him. He was dragged to his feet and taken to the house, but before his captors were all inside there was a change in the situation. Miles was being pulled forward to the light with a man at



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each side. The other fishermen were entering the door when there was a rush from the darkness without and both men were catapulted to the far side of the room. Miles realized in a moment that Herk had come to the rescue, and as his guards turned in astonishment he wrenched his left hand free and sent it smashing into the face of one of them and, without waiting to see the result, clinched with the other, a big burly fisherman who, under other circumstances, would have made an ugly antagonist. He was so taken by surprise, however, that when Miles crooked his knee under his calf and threw his weight on him he went over like a log, his head striking the edge of one of the bunks as he fell. Before Miles could turn, the man he had struck was upon him like a tiger. He saw a thousand stars as a heavy fist landed back of his ear and he went to the floor dazed. He realized, though, that he had fallen across the big man and he rolled over and over in an effort to escape from the one who had felled him as well as to get clear of the fellow under him. The latter was reviving and seemed anxious to get into the fray.

" 'It the bloody swab over the 'ead with a cheer, Bill! " he roared, as Miles rolled out of sight under the bunk. Turning on his side he tried to reach the



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boy, when a vicious kick under the chin from the point of Miles's boot brought a yell of rage from him. Herk in the meantime had been busy. When he made his first rush he had used one man as a missile with which to knock out the other, and after that a kick in the ribs disposed of the dog. When the two men had gone flying across the room, one of them lay crumpled up motionless against the wall, but the other arose full of fight, and leaped for Herk's back, as the negro turned to go to Miles's assistance. This kept Herk from reaching Miles in time to prevent the blow that floored his young master, but, in spite of the burden on his back, he reached the boy's assailant just as Miles rolled under the bunk. A kick in the stomach doubled up the fisherman "Bill," who had been asked to hit Miles "over the 'ead with a cheer," and temporarily disposed of him. While Miles lay kicking at the big fisherman, who was trying to rout him from under the bunk, Herk fastened his fingers in the hair of the man on his back. He jumped twice, hunching his back so as to work the man almost over his shoulders. Then, quick as thought, he bent forward and with his hands clasped back of the struggling fisherman's neck he swung him in a great circle through the air and brought him down like a flail across the



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big fellow Miles was struggling with. Then he straightened up to receive other comers. The man Herk had kicked rose to his feet and was again making for the negro, when a sledge-hammer blow on the point of the jaw disposed of him. Miles lost no time in crawling out.

“Now we must tie them up, Herk, and get away from here,” said Miles. “Find a line!”

There was plenty of rope and twine and the four men were quickly bound.

“It would not do to have them free themselves until we have had a good long start,” said Miles, “and I wish we——”

“Jest wait a minute,” said Herk, “and I’ll fix ’em so dey won’t get away fer one sweet whet!”

He soon reappeared, dragging a seine and, while Miles looked on approvingly, he rolled the four men up in the net and tied the big bundle so that Miles felt it was safe to make for the boat. He secured the oars, the boat was launched, and soon the shore line was swallowed in the night as they rowed out over the dark waters.



## CHAPTER XIII

### ON BOARD THE DUTCH BRIG

**I**N spite of his recent exertions, Herk bent lustily to the oars; and, as the water was comparatively still, he made good time. With every stroke Miles felt he could see the hated shores recede, and felt a thankfulness that he could not express.

“Let me help you now, Herk,” suggested Miles after an hour had passed.

“Nebber min’, I’ll tell you when I’s e tired,” was the answer. “De wind’s wid us now an’ dat’s some he’p.”

It occurred to Miles that the wind might be made to help still more. Standing up he spread his great-coat to the breeze and made a sail of it till Herk agreed to let him have a spell at the oars. So they spent the night, Herk agreeing to let Miles have a half hour’s turn at the oars several times. Finally, as the east lightened, they saw that the sun was rising



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through a heavy fog that was rapidly blowing toward them.

"The thicker the fog the less chance of being seen by pursuers and blockading ships," thought Miles. A few minutes later he heard the sound of creaking and straining he knew so well, and right across their wake plowed the cut-water of a huge vessel, whose three rows of gunports showed her to be a ship of the line of the largest type.

The uppermost row of ports was barely visible as the fog thickened into a solid bank of opaque vapor at that point. Miles heard an order delivered in English, and he breathed an involuntary prayer of thanks for the interposition of the fog. Soon the creaking and straining sounds were swallowed up in the fog, along with the vision of the dreaded man-of-war, and the two fugitives breathed freely again. The fog lasted till well on into what Miles computed was afternoon, when suddenly they emerged into clear air. Bearing down on them not three cable's lengths away was a brig that was cutting the water at a lively rate, promising to run them down unless they looked alive to their course. Miles's heart jumped into his mouth. He saw that discovery was unavoidable. "Back water, Herk!" called Miles



quickly. "We may be able to get into the fog bank before they see us." As Herk pushed on the oars Miles kept close watch on the brig, saw several sailors rush to the side and heard a hail. To his delight it was not delivered in English. Never had the sound of a foreign tongue been so welcome.

"Hold a moment, Herk!" he cried. "Pull away, straight ahead; they're friends! At least, they're not English."

Then, turning to the vessel, he shouted: "Throw us a line!" at the same time trying to make himself understood by gestures. A man disappeared from the side, and in a moment reappeared well forward with a coiled rope. Another showed up abaft the mainmast also ready to cast if the first throw failed. His services were not needed, however, as Herk's powerful strokes had brought them so close that Miles had no trouble in catching the line. Five minutes later the fugitives had climbed the fore chains and stood on the deck of the brig.

Miles asked who it was aboard who understood English, and a bright-looking young sailor spoke up with a strong "down-east" twang and offered his services as interpreter. Since Miles did not dare tell the truth, he pretended that he and Herk had been



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carried out to sea in a sudden squall and had lost their way in the fog.

With a wink the Yankee sailor, who recognized Miles as American from his speech, said between his teeth: "You may thank God this is a Dutch brig and not the British hundred-and-twenty gun ship we passed this noon!"

Turning to the captain of the vessel he repeated Miles's story with a few variations and embellishments that he thought would make it seem more probable, and added that the newcomers seemed to be able-bodied seamen. Through the interpreter Miles was informed that they were bound for Curaçao, expected to touch also at San Juan, Porto Rico, and, if possible, at Martinique. Miles, at the sailor's suggestion, declared that he and Herk would be glad to work their passage. They had been discharged from a frigate, he said, and had been just on the point of reshipping at Plymouth when they had met with their late misadventure. This story was too hurriedly constructed to explain everything, especially Miles's uniform coat and hat, but whatever the captain thought he said nothing. He cheerfully agreed to accept them as additions to his crew, and ordered the sailor to take them to the boatswain for assignment to their quarters.



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Under other conditions Miles would have found his new position intolerable. He was berthed in the same flea-infested fore-castle with his own slave and a dozen other rough, unclean sailors. He had been disgusted with his quarters and fare the first day on the *Comet*, and, later, found worse on the *Dolphin*, but these were luxurious compared with what he found here. Still, he was wise enough to realize that there was no other way of getting back across the Atlantic to home and freedom, and any labor was preferable to the life of Dartmoor Prison.

Every day, as he bent his shoulders to hauling on the yards or swabbing down the deck, he reminded himself of the weary months of prison life and whistled cheerfully.

As the Yankee, who had acted as interpreter, was the only other soul on board, besides Herk, who could speak English, and a compatriot besides, Miles and he swapped yarns by the hour. He was a typical down-easter—a fisherman from Machias port, in what is now Maine.

Shortly before the war he had been impressed by an English frigate out of Halifax. He had served across the Atlantic, and then, while the ship was at Antwerp, he got out of a port and swam to shore.



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Then, after dodging searching parties and nearly starving to death, he had tramped to Amsterdam, found work in a shipyard, and, finally, when he had mastered a practical supply of Dutch, he shipped on this brig. He had such a lively terror of British ships that he was not anxious to return to America until the war was safely over and there was no danger of his being recaptured. He told Miles quaintly that he didn't care a "rotten codfish for glory," and had had his ardor to fight "clean skeered out of him by the cat o' nine tails."

Miles, however, had not been long on the vessel before an accident completely altered his position. About a week after leaving the Channel the brig ran into a heavy gale. There were no extra hands on the merchantman to relieve the men on duty after a watch was up, during heavy weather, and even the captain kept the deck for twenty-four hours at a stretch. During the second night of the storm, when all hands were nearly exhausted, a huge roller broke on the deck just abaft the mainmast and swept everything before it. The first mate was carried overboard and lost instantly, for there was no possibility of launching a boat, and the captain was jammed under the wheel with three ribs broken. The second mate, a young nephew of the skipper's, threw up his



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hands aghast, for he knew nothing about reckoning or laying a course. The Yankee hastened to Miles with the bad news and the query whether he could navigate.

“That I can,” replied Miles.

After a brief colloquy between the Yankee, the suffering captain, and the second mate, Miles was requested to take up his berth in the forward cabin and run the ship through the Yankee interpreter. That he was glad of the change can be easily guessed. No longer a mere deck hand, working his passage, he was now actually in command. Shortly after his installation as acting commander the weather moderated, and gave all hands a chance for much-needed rest and sleep.

The crew of the brig were astonished at their new captain, but, as one of Miles's first acts was to provide as well for their comfort as the circumstances permitted, there was no growling. The experience of actually navigating a vessel by such knowledge as he possessed was of great value to Miles from a practical viewpoint, but otherwise the voyage was tedious beyond description. Head winds, persisting for weeks at a time, made the progress of the lumbering brig exasperatingly slow. Except for the scraps of Dutch that he used in talking with the captain and



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second mate his conversation was limited to Herk and the Yankee.

What had become of the *Comet* and the good friends on board of her? What of the mother and sister at home? And, above all, what had become of his father? But Miles found so much work to occupy his waking hours that he had small time to spend on fruitless worry.

After three months of buffeting head winds and storms the brig limped into the port of Wilhelmstad, Curaçao. Except for the accident, which put Miles in command, the voyage was wholly uneventful. Once he saw the enemy, three vessels of war, convoying a fleet of South American merchantmen; but, fortunately, they paid no attention to the little Dutchman. A week before making the landfall of Curaçao the injured captain was able to resume his duties, but he appointed Miles first mate and, on landing, paid him first-mate's wages for the entire voyage. With this Miles hoped to buy passage home in the first vessel bound for the United States, so in Curaçao he and Herk remained.

After a reluctant good-by the Dutch captain sailed for Rotterdam, leaving the two hoping that it would only be a matter of hours till a ship flying the Stars and Stripes would appear in the offing. The



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hours, however, lengthened into days and the days into weeks before the news came that an American schooner was entering the harbor.

She proved to be the *Byrd Rogers*, of Norfolk, and her captain gave them a hearty welcome, promising to land them in Baltimore within the month. When Miles remembered Boyle's experience with the blockaders of the Chesapeake, and his own rash promise to bring the *Lapwing* to Baltimore, he felt that the captain was possibly a little sanguine; but he was once more on the deck of an American ship, and was not in a humor for forebodings of any sort.

The days of this voyage were full of delightful anticipation. He was nearing home, and nothing could dim that fact.

He pictured the tall brick mansion with its ivy-covered wings, the carved doorway with its huge brass knocker, and imagined himself running up the little flight of stone steps to be greeted by mother and sister Debby—yes, and father, probably—none of whom he had heard from since that December nearly two years ago, that seemed a hundred years ago. What stories there would be to tell! How good to sleep in the big four-poster again and hear the birds out on the trees just beside the windows! When Herk got reminiscent he would talk in an af-



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fecting way about "de roas' capon, de strawb'y jam ole 'Liza used to make," and go on describing home delicacies in a way that would have made a brass image water at the mouth, to say nothing of a nineteen-year-old lad who had lived on corned beef and salt pork for months, and even years. The long days of suffering at Dartmoor were only parts of a sickening nightmare now, and the world was full of brightness and joy. Herk's "humming Æolian harp," as Miles called it, was heard from morning till night, and his face was bisected by a smile that kept the whole crew in humor.

The region of the Bermudas was left behind, and they were giving the dreaded Hatteras waters a wide berth when one day the lookout descried a sail on the western horizon. As the wind was on the *Byrd Rogers's* beam, every sail was hoisted and her course altered to get the full benefit of whatever breeze was blowing. "We're too near home now," said her captain, "to take any chances of having a good voyage spoiled by running into an enemy." Miles sympathized with this view of the situation, and earnestly hoped that the little vessel would show a clean pair of heels.

As the hours dragged on, to his intense disappointment, the sails of the stranger continued to rise



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out of the water until now her body stood well up, showing even to the naked eye the bulk and trim of a large man-of-war. It was soon equally plain that she was in full chase.

In half an hour Miles could see the long, yellow stripe of the gun deck along her side. When at last she ran up the English flag, and he saw the puff of smoke from her bow chaser, he turned to Herk, who stood at his side, and said: "Herk, we won't see home this time, nor find out what's become of father, either!" Herk saw the moist eyes and noted the broken note in his master's voice, and quickly said: "Don't you mind, Marse Miles, we'se done got away from 'em once an' we kin do it again! An' don' yo' worry 'bout marster; he kin tek keer of hisself."

The *Byrd Rogers* hove to almost before the ball that ricocheted by had taken its last bound, and a boat was seen putting out from the frigate.



## CHAPTER XIV

### A CAPTIVE AGAIN

THEIR captor was the *Achilles* of forty-four guns, one of the newest frigates in His Majesty's navy, but Miles had no admiration in his eyes as he looked up at her shining sides and the row of grinning faces that lined her rail. On stepping aboard with his kit of personal belongings, he was curtly ordered below with Herk and the captain and crew of the *Byrd Rogers*.

"Hold hard, a moment," said a voice; and, as the marine that was hustling the little party below stepped aside deferentially, Miles turned to face the speaker. He saw a fresh-faced young lieutenant of about nineteen or twenty.

"Are you the fellow they say was an officer on a privateer and managed to get away from Dartmoor?"

"Yes."

"Egad, you did well! Will you share my quarters?"



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Miles stared with astonishment. "Do you mean it?" he asked, after a pause.

"With all my heart."

"Then I will gladly, 'with all my heart,'" replied Miles, and followed his new friend in the direction of the wardroom, wondering if he were only dreaming.

The young officer led the way to his quarters and showed Miles an empty bunk under his own.

"Now, Mr. Yankee," said he, "I want you to stow yourself as comfortably as you can here and be messmate with me. I'm Lieutenant O'Rourke, of Dublin—at your service, sir."

"You are very kind indeed, Mr. O'Rourke," replied Miles, still wondering. "My name is Miles Gadsden, of Annapolis, Maryland."

"I tell you, Mr. Gadsden, I have learned how a prisoner of war should be treated, and that from one of your Yankee sailors, the late Captain James Lawrence, peace to his memory! Aye, he was a gallant man—one of the finest I ever met—Lord, what a pity he wasn't in *our* navy! Well, I was aboard the *Peacock* in an unfortunate scrape she got into with the *Hornet*—you know—" Here he made a comical, wry face and Miles grinned broadly, for he knew the story.



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“He shot us all to pieces, but no sooner were we aboard as prisoners than he treated us like long-lost brothers. Never saw anything like it. All of us drew up a memorial of thanks when we went ashore, but it don’t half express what we felt. Saddest thing in the world his death on the *Chesapeake*,” and the lieutenant shook his head. “I was exchanged long ago, but my orders got muddled somehow and I am just going home, after being six months on blockade, as a passenger on this infernal tub.”

When Miles followed O’Rourke to the mess table that night, he found himself seated at his new friend’s elbow near the end of the table, awaiting the rest. The kindness of O’Rourke he found reflected in the faces of his immediate neighbors, though the Englishmen were by nature much more reserved than the warm-blooded young Irishman. Miles rightly guessed that O’Rourke had arranged to have the kindest disposed men sit near them at the table. As he glanced at the other members of the wardroom mess, he saw that, while some stared at him insolently, the greater number affected not to notice him at all. Knowing, too, that he owed his unusual privileges to the urgings of O’Rourke, he tried to make himself as agreeable as he could. Moreover, Miles knew that there was a prejudice



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against privateersmen as distinguished from man-of-war'smen, and he felt that he had to prove by his conduct that a privateersman could be as much of a gentleman as could a commissioned officer.

The next morning, as soon as O'Rourke was off watch, he joined Miles, with the question, "How'd ye like to look over our tub?"

"Nothing better."

"Ever been on a man-o'-war?"

"Yes, I went over the *Constitution* when she touched at Annapolis two years ago. I saw her run in under all sail, studding sails on both sides, and then, taking all in together, make a flying moor. Most beautiful sight in the world! I was wild from that moment to join the navy. But I couldn't get the commission."

"Mine cost my dad fifty pounds," grinned O'Rourke; "we buy 'em on our side. Well, if you've seen the *Constitution*—blast her sides—you'll have a chance now to see a *real* frigate," bantered the Irishman.

"Miles hit back with a remark about the *Java* and the *Guerrière*, the two English frigates captured by the *Constitution*, and off they went, a pair of decidedly friendly enemies.

For a few moments they walked slowly along



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the gangway that connected the quarter-deck with the forecastle. On the deck below, the "waist" of the ship, they saw the watch painting the guns, flemishing the ropes, and busy with a hundred odds and ends about the rigging.

"Blurt it out, man," said O'Rourke, eying Miles, whose face bore an odd look of disapproval—"say anything you like—when the first luff ain't in ear-shot."

"To speak plainly," said Miles in an undertone, "I never saw such a collection of brutes in my life! Just look at those faces!" and he turned in the direction of a group of ruffians that were being chased up the shrouds by the boatswain's mates who whacked them with their "colts."

"I never saw such treatment even among the most cruel overseers on our slave-worked plantations," he added in horror.

"Fact is," replied the other, "these rascallions *are* as ruffianly as they look. Most of the men on this ship I'm told came out of York Jail. They represent every crime on the calendar. Some of 'em were pressed out of taverns when they were drunk, and if they had any respectability once they've lost it now. That's why we have to go at 'em with a rattan—they're brutes and respect only brute force."



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Miles said nothing, but he made a mental comparison between the alert, eager fellows he saw aboard the *Constitution* and these scourings of jails and low taverns.

"Life in the forecastle must be a hell," he observed.

"It is," assented O'Rourke cheerfully. "But it's nearly six bells now, and if you'll come aft you'll see a bit of our purgatory." Wondering what his companion meant, Miles turned on his heel and the two sauntered back.

"Why does John Bull resort to impressment, anyway?" asked Miles. "We don't have to and we get far better crews."

"But you don't maintain a fleet of eleven hundred sail," returned the other. "It's that fleet alone that saved us from Bonaparte and we *had* to have the men to man them, no matter how or where we got 'em. That's why we fellows have borrowed a man or two from your Yankee whalers."

Miles was wondering how far he could continue to discuss the point without getting on dangerous ground, when his attention was distracted by a commotion at the foot of the poop-deck ladder. The captain—a thickset, bulldog sort of man—came on deck at that instant. "Turn the hands aft!" he



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growled to the first lieutenant, who stood by evidently expecting the order.

That officer bawled to a midshipman, who ran forward and passed the word to the boatswain's mates. The order was piped and shouted to all on the ship and the men came shambling and scuffling to the quarter-deck.

Miles and O'Rourke took positions behind the officers on the weather side, standing on the slides of a carronade, where they would be inconspicuous and yet could see the coming ceremony.

On the opposite side of the ship were herded the crew, on whose faces Miles read still more clearly the story of crime and brutal treatment. Above, on the poop deck, were drawn up the marines, in gay scarlet and white. At the foot of the poop ladder stood the captain, with his subordinates grouped behind him.

At the captain's order, "Rig the gratings!" the carpenter and carpenter's mates dragged up two of the wooden gratings that covered the hatches. One of these was laid flat on the deck and the other secured upright against the poop rail.

Meanwhile, the captain had been handed a list of offenders on the report by the master at arms—the ship's policeman. "Tompkins!" he called.



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“ Reported for spilling burgoo on the deck. Aye, we’ll teach you neatness on a man-o’-war! ”

Tompkins stepped forward from the huddle of seamen.

“ Anything to say? ”

“ No, sir, except that the man who reported me had a grudge to settle——”

“ Shut up, or I’ll give you a hundred instead of a dozen! Strip! ”

At the word Tompkins pulled off his shirt, advanced to the grating, and extended his arms upon it.

“ Seize him up! ” cried the captain, and the quartermaster tied the culprit’s wrists to the grating. “ Seized up, sir! ” he reported.

Then a boatswain’s mate stepped forward, taking out of a bag a red-handled instrument that Miles immediately recognized as the “ cat,” or “ cat o’ nine tails.”

“ Do your duty,” said the captain; “ give him a dozen.”

Thereupon the executioner drew the cords through his fingers; then, drawing back with the full sweep of his arm, he struck the bare back with terrible force.

The victim gasped, and Miles noticed that every



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cord left on the flesh its trail of blood. The first blow was followed by another till the round dozen was complete.

By that time the back was cut and mangled till it looked like raw meat. Miles turned sick—as he had when he first saw blood in battle. But there was no excitement now to divert his attention.

When the last stroke had fallen and the bruised wretch had been unlashd, he weakly raised his hand to wipe away the cold perspiration that blinded him, and then turned toward a young man in a lieutenant's uniform who stood under the shadow of the quarter-deck, and, with a face quivering with passion, said: "I'll remember!" The look was returned by one equally as vindictive, that changed to one of gloating as the captain roared: "Give him five and twenty more!"

The boatswain's mates grabbed their victim just as he was about to sink to the deck, and he was again triced up to the grating. The first stroke brought a groan, and Miles found a relief in watching the face of the lieutenant whose enmity the sailor seemed to have aroused. He saw a bloated face still further disfigured by the ravages of unrestrained passion. The cleanness of Miles's own bringing up made it impossible for him to analyze what



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he saw there, but the impression gained was a true one. He felt instinctively the cruelty of the hardened gaze of the thick-lidded eyes that were fixed on the quivering mass of flesh in front of him. Every stroke of the cat that sent a chill to Miles's heart seemed to add to the sardonic smile on the lieutenant's lips.

When the twenty-five strokes had been told off, the culprit was again unlashd. This time two boat-swain's mates were needed to support him. As they carried him away to the surgeon, a third drew the discarded shirt carelessly over his shoulders and turned to await further orders.

There were other offenders on the list for the morning, but Miles crept away quietly, unable to bear another such exhibition.

When the flogging of the other culprits was over, O'Rourke found Miles crouched under the rail, looking actually yellow with nausea.

"What's the matter?" laughed O'Rourke; "you're a greenhorn at a flogging, I fancy. I was that way first time, but this was less than forty, and even forty isn't anything at all."

"You fellows like to call yourselves freeborn Britons," said Miles, when he had braced up sufficiently to talk; "but beating a man's back open be-



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cause he spilled some of that abominable stuff—anyway, that's worse slavery than you'll find anywhere in the world. No wonder your sailors desert."

"Oh, come! I told you these brutes won't respect anything but blows, you can't have any sort of discipline without the cat. You have it on your own little fighting tubs."

"Nelson, I've heard, never used the cat, and he had the absolute devotion——"

"Pooh! I know you've *got* to use the cat, but of course it can be abused. What would you think of a man's getting a hundred lashes instead of a dozen? I've seen that often. And worse than that is 'flogging through the fleet,' when they take a poor brute from one ship to another till they've all had a chance. I've known a man to choose hanging from the yardarm rather'n take that punishment. The worst case I knew was once when a fellow came to the last ship he was found dead, with the meat on his back whipped off to the bones; and, as there were fifty lashes still due the man, the captain had them laid on, anyway.

"But now this case to-day; the fellow impressed me as having some sort of real grievance, but you never can tell. Carrington, the man he accused of being the author of his troubles, is capable of any



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sort of villainy, and Heaven help the men that serve under him when he gets his captain's commission. However, the man who was flogged may be one of those insubordinate rascals that never can be tamed."

"Who's Carrington?" inquired Miles.

"That officer—leftenant—standing near the captain."

"Egad, I believe he'd be capable of anything. He has as brutal a phiz as any of your fore-castle hands."

"He *is* a rascal. I'll find an opportunity to try his metal when I get a chance ashore; there's no love lost between him and me, I warrant you. Keep out of his way to avoid trouble, because one of his pet aversions is the Yankee nation. He seems to have a grudge against the whole of you rebels."

"Well," laughed Miles, "before I met Dr. McGrath at Dartmoor and a certain red-haired Irishman I could name, I felt about the same regarding all Britishers. My family had a hard experience with one before the war—one of your naval gentlemen, too."

O'Rourke was interested immediately and Miles told the story of the young lieutenant, serving sentence of suspension who passed himself off with



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forged letters of introduction as a lord and sponged on the hospitality of the Gadsdens.

“If I only knew the rascal’s real name, O’Rourke, I’d get you to help me find him and——”

“If I found the pup, Gadsdy, I wouldn’t leave you a bone of the spalpeen to whack at, bedad!”

Afterwards, when flogging was on, which was almost a daily occurrence, Miles kept out of sight; and he resolved that if ever he reached his ambition and commanded a ship under the Stars and Stripes, he would throw the “cat” overboard.



## CHAPTER XV

### BAD NEWS FOR MILES

THE freedom Miles enjoyed, thanks to O'Rourke, gave him an unbroken leisure, part of which he devoted to studying his friend's books on navigation, and learning all he could about man-of-war discipline. Naturally, he talked often with O'Rourke about his father, of whom he still knew nothing except that he had been at Dartmoor and that Dr. McGrath seemed to know more than he was willing to tell. The Irishman, however, protested that nothing out of the way could have happened.

"Why, if he was taken from Dartmoor, it was only to exchange him," encouraged O'Rourke; "what else, in Heaven's name? Don't worry over nothing!"

This from his friend did cheer up Miles considerably, and he needed cheer in many ways. The days spent in company with O'Rourke or his genial countryman, Dr. Castleman, were pleasant enough, but



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every night when Miles rolled into his bunk he knew that he was one day nearer the ghastly prison from which he had escaped with such difficulty only a few months before. This O'Rourke realized, too, but he was careful to avoid anything that might suggest the dreary walls of Dartmoor to his friend's mind, and talked hopefully of a near conclusion of the war.

After a while Miles had had so much cheering treatment that he began to feel pretty sure of his father's safety. One day, however, Carringford, who had hitherto ignored Miles and had no dealings with O'Rourke, deliberately sauntered across the deck to where Miles was standing, leaning against a gun.

"Your name is Gadsden, I believe?" he said insolently.

Miles boiled, but he knew that, for his friend's sake, he must keep his temper.

"Aye," he replied indifferently.

"I wondered if you happened to know anything about a fellow named Gadsden—a privateer captain, I think—who was taken by one of our sloops early in the war and hanged as a pirate?" Carringford put the question gently, almost politely.

Miles was thrown completely off his guard. "What was his ship?" he gasped anxiously.



## BAD NEWS FOR MILES

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“Let me see,” reflected the Englishman, surveying Miles’s agitation with a covert smile. “Let—me—see— it was—oh, yes, the *Eagle!*”

“Are you sure?” cried Miles, his heart thumping wildly.

“True enough,” sneered his tormentor, “caught without any letters of marque, and that’s piracy. I’m sorry, though, for apparently he is some relative of yours.” And Carrington left Miles and strolled forward.

“Hanged!” The thoughts whirled dizzily through Miles’s head while he struggled to think clearly. Was Carrington lying? Was it—no, it *couldn’t* be true! But how did he know the name of the vessel and the time of the capture? The name, at least, Miles knew he had never mentioned to O’Rourke; and he, for that matter, had never before exchanged a word with Carrington. Ah! and was that why Dr. McGrath had suddenly grown unresponsive to Miles’s eager questioning? The lad felt as if a great mass of lead lay on his heart; he buried his face in his hands with hot tears trickling through his fingers, not caring who saw him.

When O’Rourke found him half an hour later he had not moved. To his friend’s sympathetic questioning Miles poured out his heart, but no cheering



words of his friend were able to lift the melancholy Carrington had so suddenly thrown upon him. The more Miles reflected, the more the miserable story seemed likely to be true; and yet, time and again, he would spring to his feet with clenched hands, crying, "It isn't true, it *can't* be true!"

Since leaving Wilhelmstad, Miles had not been feeling in top-notch condition, and this new worry completed the work of the tropical sun. A few days after Carrington's story, he awoke one morning with a splitting headache and a high fever. Dr. Castleton, after an examination, promptly ordered him to the sick bay, a small room on the gun deck in the very eyes of the ship, where there was better ventilation than anywhere else below decks. The following day the fever increased and for the next ten days he continued to suffer all the discomforts of a bad bilious attack. O'Rourke was a constant visitor, doing his best to cheer his disconsolate friend, until an incident occurred that led Dr. Castleton to prohibit his calls.

It was the afternoon of a day when Miles's fever seemed to have abated somewhat that O'Rourke approached Miles's hammock, chuckling and shaking with merriment. "Oh, I'd have given a thousand guineas, Gadsden, to have had you on deck just



now! D'ye mind the big African you brought aboard?"

"Yes, Herk. What of him?" answered Miles, interested at once.

"Well, there's a big Norwegian aboard, named Knetsen, who is a perfect bull of a fellow. He has whipped his way to be cock o' the walk in the fo'c's'le; and, since your blackie came, some of those who had been thumped have been hoping that a deliverer had arrived, so they arranged for a fight between the two giants. Carrington, you know, is a pet nephew of the captain's, and as soon as he got wind of the thing he worked it so that the old man agreed to let 'em have a regular gladiator affair on the fo'c's'le."

"Did Herk kill him or just cripple him?" asked Miles, at which O'Rourke laughed heartily and continued:

"Well, as I say, they gathered forward and formed a ring with the two big brutes in the middle, and the greatest brute of 'em all, Carrington, circling around inside the ring, making himself as officious and obnoxious as usual. No other man of his rank would have thought of mixing in with the rabble. The rest of us got positions of vantage in the shrouds, on the rails, and anywhere we could. Well,



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the nigger kept protesting that he 'didn't want to hurt de gemman none,' until the Scandinavian waded into him and thumped him a belt just over the ear that would have killed a wild ox of the moors.

"Then the Norwegian drew back and danced about with a broken hand. The nigger looked at him, and, my word, I believe he was more dazed with surprise than with the effects of the blow. Then, with a bellow, he made a rush for poor Knetsen that knocked three men down the ladder and sent about a dozen more sprawling over the deck and against the rail. The crowd broke for safety, but there wasn't much room, and when they swung away from the two fighters I saw blackie's foot fly out and strike Carringford in the pit of the stomach and send him doubled up like a jackknife against the rail. It was apparently ac-ac-accidental, but——"

O'Rourke stopped to indulge in a paroxysm of laughter at thoughts of the scene.

"Then, then, ha, ha! the climax came. The black Goliath caught Knetsen by the seat of his breeches and by the nape of the neck, thrust him for'ard, drew him back, gave him a yo-heave-ho, and catapulted him over the larboard rail into the briny!"

At this point, unnoticed by either, Dr. Castleton entered. Miles was leaning on one elbow, drinking



in every word of O'Rourke's recital with dancing eyes and parted lips.

O'Rourke was seated on a chest, rocking back and forth, with his hands pressed to his sides and roaring with laughter.

"Here!" snorted the doctor; "this is fine behavior for a sick bay, Terence! You may have done damage that cannot be undone—don't you know that excitement is a dangerous tonic for a fever patient?"

O'Rourke sobered instantly as he saw Miles fall back weakly, almost in a faint, as the reaction from the excitement of the incident set in, and immediately he arose to go.

"Tell him," he whispered, "that they fished Knetsen back aboard considerably the worse for his beating and ducking. Tell him, too, that Carrington lost ten guineas on the fight and——"

"Clear out, blatherskite!" growled Castleton, and O'Rourke fled.

The following morning as O'Rourke came up the ladder he saw Dr. Castleton seated on the forward hatch, puffing on a little Limerick dudeen, and at once went over to inquire as to Miles's condition.

"He's a sick lad, he is," said Castleton, "and it's a shame to think of his staying on this old hulk only to face that hell at Dartmoor prison once more."



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“Indeed it is. He may not be exchanged for months—aye, years, and they’ll all but kill him for escaping.”

“Yes; and one thing that may make it go ill with him is the fact that he takes his imprisonment so much to heart. Then, you see he has been down in the tropics, and there’s no telling what sort of poisons are in his system.”

“By Jibs’l, I’ve got it!” ejaculated O’Rourke. The other looked at him questioningly.

“The boy’ll die, d’ye mind, if he’s not set ashore. You, as a doctor,” this with a wink, “know that it’s bloody murder to keep him aboard ship when we’re only a few days from sightin’ the Azores. Another thing I came near overlookin’: he’s just long enough from the Indies to be showin’ symptoms of the horrible yellow jack. He’s got it—I know he’s got it! I feel it in me bones, and you, I say, as a professional diagnoser of human ills, know it twice as sure as gun’s iron!”

“But the symptoms of yellow fever are——”

“Oh, I know all about that!” interrupted O’Rourke. “He’s got every blessed one of them to an alarmin’ degree.” He poked his friend in the ribs with his thumb and winked emphatically again.

“You know the skipper will hate to lose the op-



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portunity of seeing as nice a boy as Gadsden go back to Dartmoor, but if the ship's surgeon says he must be set ashore, and insists in the name of humanity, he might possibly agree, though 'I ha'e me doots!' But if that same ship's surgeon goes to him in a panic and tells him that there is a possibility of an epidemic of yellow fever, I think there's a good guessing that Gadsden'll be bundled ashore in a trice."

After this the doctor and O'Rourke might have been seen in earnest conversation several times, but as to the subject they discussed—not even Miles had an inkling until later in the plot. The young Irishman kept a keen eye on the ship's bearings, and hastened to report to the doctor when the Azores were but a day's sailing away. Castleton proceeded to the captain's cabin with a tremendously worried look on his face, and was closeted with him for over an hour. When he reappeared, O'Rourke was anxiously waiting for him by the poop ladder, but was reassured by a gentle quiver of Castleton's left eyelid. The two went down to the surgeon's cabin where they could talk without fear of being heard.

"The captain was soreheaded when I mentioned Gadsden," began Castleton, "and cursed him fluently for ten minutes for making trouble. Wouldn't hear of putting him ashore—'most irregular proceeding,



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Dartmoor too good for scurvy Yankees, anyway.' But when I got down to a confidential whisper—about 'West Indies,' 'yellow jack,' 'suspicious symptoms'—Egad, he turned yellow with fright himself!"

"Put him ashore to-morrow—anything—ought to be heaved overboard this minute!" he croaked in a panic—"There, now, Terence, don't you laugh, you blithering numskull—" he added warningly, as O'Rourke showed alarming symptoms. "You make too much noise. Nobody must suspect anything, not even Gadsden."

O'Rourke was on watch at sunrise the following morning and hailed with delight the tapering volcanic cone of Mt. Pico, the outpost of Europe, standing high above the clouds. All the morning the frigate skirted the high green shores of the islands. Shortly after noon the mountainous banks over their port side parted, disclosing a beautiful semi-circular harbor, shut in by high green hills, at whose feet lay rows upon rows of whitewashed houses, looking in the distance like the broken seats of an old amphitheater. The *Achilles* altered her course and entered the harbor, and O'Rourke did not need to be told that they had arrived at the island of Fayal.



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Hastening below to the sick boy, he found Castleton getting Miles ready to go ashore. The boy was too weak to stand, or even sit up for any length of time, and Castleton was putting some clothes on him and wrapping his legs in a blanket.

"I don't understand this," said Miles weakly, "we haven't got to Plymouth yet, have we?"

"No, this is Fayal, Azores—you know; we are going to dump you on the Yankee consul here."

"But I still don't understand!"

"Don't have to—just shut up and lie still."

"Tell him," put in O'Rourke, "to remember that he is nearly dead, and not to look too lively while we're taking him ashore. And if he knows what yellow jack looks like——"

"Dry up—not so loud," warned the surgeon.

A light began to dawn on Miles. He grinned appreciatively. "By Jove, you fellows are good—" he began, when suddenly the quartermaster came to the door. Miles promptly closed his eyes, and as the four seamen carried him up on deck and down the gangway to the cutter, he moaned pathetically from time to time, or mumbled a few incoherent words. His fever was still high and he felt light-headed enough, but he knew that he must play his part in the little plot.



## THE YOUNG PRIVATEERSMAN

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When they had laid him out in the stern sheets of the cutter, with Castleton in command, Miles's heart suddenly stood still as he heard above him the rasping voice of Carringtonford:

"What the devil are they doing with that rascally Yankee down there?"

"Taking him ashore, sir," replied the sergeant of marines, "he's like to die."

"Damme, let him die here, then; I'll wager a month's pay O'Rourke is at the bottom of this—Where's the captain?"

"Give way!" called O'Rourke, and "Give way!" echoed Castleton, and to Miles's relief the cutter shot away from the sides of the ship. Miles could hear his enemy cursing eloquently, but it was soon too late to bring the cutter back. In a few minutes her crew boated their oars and swung in true man-of-war's style alongside the quay.

The captain of the *Achilles* had already signaled ashore for the American consul, with the request that he be prepared to receive a dying countryman, and as Miles looked up on the wharf he saw a florid, kindly face with eyes bent on his own.

The surgeon went ashore first and spoke in low tones to the consul. The latter looked relieved, and, turning to Miles, he said brightly:



## BAD NEWS FOR MILES

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“I am Consul Dabney, Mr. Gadsden; you’re to come home with me and get patched up.”

A carriage was waiting, into which Miles was gently laid. He had no chance to say good-by beyond pressing the hand of O’Rourke and a whispered “God bless you—both,” when the two Irishmen were gone, and he found himself jolting over the rough pavements of the little Portuguese city.

After a torturing five-minutes’ ride, Miles was relieved by the stopping of the carriage. The door was flung open and he was carried gently indoors into a cool, darkened room. He heard Dabney speaking and a woman’s answer near him in a sympathetic motherly tone. Under the sudden let down from the high nervous tension of the past hour, combined with the fever, Miles suddenly lost consciousness.



## CHAPTER XVI

### AMONG FRIENDS

WHEN Miles regained clear consciousness, after three days of feverish tossing, during which he imagined himself back in the low-studded sick bay aboard the *Achilles*, he opened his eyes to an airy room with flaming geraniums in the windows, through which he saw the blue water. Opposite his bed hung a lithograph portrait of Washington.

Where was he? Slowly, piece by piece, he tried to put scraps of his recollections together. He remembered at last that O'Rourke had told him that he was to be put ashore at Fayal in care of the American consul. Later there came to him a confused recollection of going ashore in a boat and being brought into a house. This place then must be the consul's residence. He dropped asleep again for an hour and awoke to see a lady standing over him with a dish of something steaming hot.



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"Ah, Mr. Gadsden, you are very much better to-day, aren't you?"

"You have the advantage of me," said Miles, weakly smiling; "I haven't the least idea who you are, but I know you have been taking good care of me."

The other laughed cheerily. "Let me introduce myself," she said. "I am Mrs. Dabney, wife of the American consul in Fayal. We are only too delighted to take a brave countryman into our home," and she passed her hand over Miles's forehead. "Your fever has gone. You were a pretty sick boy when you came, and you mustn't talk now, or you won't get any better. No fretting, no worrying—just sleep and rest."

The voice and manner reminded Miles of his mother.

He took the slender hand in his and kissed the finger tips, at which Mrs. Dabney bent over and stroked his brow in a motherly fashion that went to his heart. He took the broth she gave him, and as his head fell back on the pillow he drew a great sigh of content. It seemed so long since he had slept in a comfortable bed, or heard a feminine voice. He had suddenly, in this out-of-the-way place, dropped into a real home. It meant almost as much



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to him as his own home, and his heart went out to this gentle, kindly hostess.

Thanks to the quiet and the skillful nursing, Miles was soon on his feet.

Many a pleasant afternoon during the month that followed he spent chatting with the Dabneys over events of the war, or strolling about the quaint city of the Azores and the surrounding country with their son, a boy of fifteen.

On the subject of his father, Miles found ready sympathy from his warm-hearted host; and Mr. Dabney made this point which Miles found comforting, namely: that the hanging of any American privateersman, unless proper cause was clearly shown, would naturally provoke reprisal on the part of the United States, and that no nation would risk its own captives if its action were not clearly justified. Of course, the idea of Miles's father turning pirate was so absurd that it would have struck the lad as comical if there was not such a terrible probability that the charge had been actually made and the sentence executed.

From Mr. Dabney, also, Miles learned of the progress of the war, especially the great victories on Lake Erie, and Lake Champlain, news of the latter having arrived just about the time Miles recovered.



## AMONG FRIENDS

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To counteract the pride he felt in the naval victories of the war, he had to learn with humiliation of the blundering incapacity of most of the army operations and the burning of Washington. Even the story of the bravery of his friend, Captain Barney, at the disgraceful rout of Bladensburg, hardly lessened the shame of it all.

“How gloriously our navy has shown up!” exclaimed Miles. “I was wild to get a middy’s warrant, but failed. Had to be satisfied with privateering.”

“Don’t be ashamed of that, my boy,” replied Mr. Dabney; “glorious as our little navy has proved itself, it is now bottled up idle in all the ports of the coast by the enemy’s blockading fleet, while hundreds of privateers are still terrorizing British commerce and making the merchants of London cry for peace with America at any price. Some of our privateersmen are a ruffian lot; but, as a whole, our privateers are fighting our cause for us more than our army and navy combined. If you have served on the *Comet* you have good reason to be proud of the fact.”

“Indeed I am,” assented Miles warmly, and the conversation turned toward the possibility of the war’s coming to an end soon.

When Mr. Dabney learned that Miles was fond



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of fencing, he asked him to teach his son Charles, and Miles, eager to do anything for his friend, devoted himself to making his young pupil learn the use of the blade. Mr. Dabney, like Lusson, believed that the old-fashioned "small sword" was the only gentleman's weapon and despised the pistol. For Miles the teaching was a renewal of the practice he had dropped for over a year and at first he found himself alarmingly rusty. When not engaged in sword practice, Miles and Charles Dabney roamed the rugged hillsides around the town, leading a fine, outdoor life that soon brought Miles back into the pink of condition.

Several times during the weeks that followed Miles's recovery he complained to Mr. Dabney of being idle at a time when his country needed every man. He had, perhaps, also a father's death to avenge.

"Well," remarked the other after Miles had been speaking in this vein, "we shall be sorry to see you go, but we know how you feel. It won't be long, I think, before one of our Yankee privateers comes into the harbor, and they'll be glad enough to ship you aboard. In fact, two of them turned up while you were still sick abed."

On this chance Miles built his hopes. About a



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week later, as Miles and Mr. Dabney were turning back home for tea, after an afternoon's walk on the sea-wall, the latter stopped suddenly and looked sharply at a smart brig that was just then rounding the high promontory at the harbor entrance.

"My word, that looks like a Yankee now!—She is indeed!" he cried excitedly as the flag became distinct. "I believe that's the *Enterprise*, though I don't see how she happens to turn up here."

They hurried to the pier, for Dabney said that the captain would pay a call as soon as he had anchored. Sure enough, as they stood watching her, the gig shot out from her side and headed for the quay in smart man-of-war style.

"My word, that looks like—" ejaculated Dabney, as he peered at the figure in the stern-sheets through his glass—"It can't be—yes, it's old Sam Reid!"

Up flew the oars in exact unison and the boat swung alongside.

"Hullo, Dabney!" cried Captain Reid. "Came ashore to hear the news, and pass the time of day!" The two men clasped hands, and greeted each other warmly.

"Here, Reid," said Dabney, turning to Miles,



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who stood at a short distance aside, "here's a fellow-countryman, Mr. Gadsden, of Annapolis. He wants to ship with you, if you'll let him."

Reid looked sharply at the lad, and seemed satisfied with what he saw.

"How do you happen to be here, Mr. Gadsden?" he inquired as the three turned up the street to the consul's residence. Miles told the story briefly, and added that he was anxious to get into active service again.

"All right, my boy, ship with me; but you'll have to be a supernumerary as you were on the *Comet*," he added with a laugh. "I can promise you plenty of fight, anyway."

"Reid, what's your ship this time?" asked Dabney.

"The *General Armstrong*, Dab; ain't she a beauty? Regular man-o'-war style *she* is, and man-o'-war discipline we have on board, too. I'd back her against any corvette of the British navy."

"I took her for one of our regular sloops, the *Enterprise*," said Dabney. "Is this her maiden venture?"

"Maiden nothing! Man, she's famous! She was under Captain Champlain last year, and fought a long stand-up fight with a heavy sloop of war.



## AMONG FRIENDS

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I'll tell you the tale when you come to dine in my cabin this evening."

After a glass of native wine at the Dabneys', Captain Reid announced that he must return.

"I want that fresh water shipped aboard as early to-morrow morning as you can get it to me, Dab; and, Mr. Gadsden, suppose you come aboard with me this evening and see my little brig before dinner?"

"Thank you, sir, I shall be delighted," replied Miles, and back they strolled to the pier.

"By Je-hosh-a-phat!" exclaimed the burly captain as he came in sight of the harbor. Around the promontory swung lazily a large man-of-war brig with the ensign of England drooping at her gaff in the light air.

"There's a Johnny Bull, twice the size of the *General Armstrong*. Got what I bragged I wanted, didn't I?—and more, too!" He grinned ruefully. "Harkee, Dab, do you think she'll respect the neutrality of the port?"

"Why, yes, Reid, England and Portugal are very friendly, and the English aren't likely to insult an ally."

"H'm, by the same token, England wouldn't mind taking liberties with a sniveling little nation



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she has shown favors to. Well, let 'em try it. I've got some fellows on board that can put up as pretty a fight as they want."

Miles, excited at the prospect of adventure, eagerly followed Captain Reid into the gig. On the way over, the latter was silent, eying the British ship sourly the while.

Arriving on board, Reid introduced Miles to his three officers—Worth, Williams, and Johnson—all young for their duties, but fine, self-reliant specimens of manhood that made Miles proud of his countrymen.

After the first greetings, Miles spoke to Mr. Williams, the second officer.

"What do you think of our friend, the enemy?"

"Don't trust 'em," replied the other; "there's the first luff and the old man talking it over on the fo'c's'le."

"Look!" cried Miles, but no one needed the word. Evidently the enemy had learned from the pilot-boat that the *General Armstrong* was a Yankee privateer, for she suddenly cut her cable and made sail, anchoring nearer the *Armstrong*, and in such a position as to cut off escape from the harbor.

"Mischief afoot to-night," said Reid to Wil-



liams as he passed Miles, "but they won't find us napping!"

All liberty ashore was forbidden for that night and, instead, the men went about quietly clearing the ship for action.

The sun had just set when a muffled exclamation drew Miles's eye from the English brig. There, with sails silhouetted against the sunset sky, came two more ships, a frigate and a razee, all flying English colors.

"Whew, but we are in for it!" said Miles to himself, with something of a gasp.

As soon as the two strangers entered the harbor, the three exchanged signals for several minutes.

"I can't read them signals," said a lanky tar to his mate near Miles, "but I'll bet all my cruise money that the brig says she's bottled up a darned Yankee privateer and would like permission to eat us alive."

As dusk settled on the harbor the English brig began getting out her boats with a considerable stir on her decks, which was not common to a peaceful ship just anchored in a friendly harbor.

A small boat now put off from shore and fairly jumped through the water to the side of the *General Armstrong*. It came alongside, its single occupant



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swung up on her boom, and asked breathlessly for Captain Reid.

"Why, it's young Dabney," said the captain. "What news?"

"Father sent me to tell you to look out for yourself to-night. There will be trouble with that English brig, the *Carnation*. He says the Portuguese governor is too much of a coward to interfere. Father says to get in close under the castle."

"Thankee, lad," replied Reid, "my compliments to your father. Now, you can't be too quick about getting ashore again."

The boy was off in a twinkling. He was challenged by the cockswain of one of the boats of the *Carnation*, but he passed without reply and the Englishman dared not fire.

Acting on the advice of Dabney, Reid ordered the anchor tripped, and as there was not enough air stirring to use sails, he got out the huge sweeps. Slowly, but steadily, the privateer forged ahead. Night had fallen, but the moon was just rising in a cloudless sky, and it seemed almost as bright as day.

As Miles stood on a gun in the waist of the ship, watching the *Carnation*, he saw, immediately after Reid's maneuver, a bracing of the yards and heard the pipe of the boatswain's whistle.



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“ I think, sir,” he said to Captain Reid, who was passing, “ they are trying to make sail after us.”

“ Aye, very likely,” and he glanced at the drooping sails. “ Mr. Gadsden, will you assist Mr. Worth in breaking out the muskets and ammunition? Officers and men on this vessel will hereafter move silently, and not speak above a whisper.”

Miles hurried to obey. They passed the order to the gunner and saw to it that the proper ammunition lay ready beside the guns, and the muskets were served out to the men who stood in readiness at their quarters. While he was busy in the magazine, the watch had cleared ship for battle, and the boatswain had silently summoned the men to their stations.

Miles buckled on a brace of pistols, selected a well-balanced cutlass from the racks, and took the station assigned to him in the forward division of guns.



## CHAPTER XVII

### A DESPERATE DEFENSE

SEEING that he could not reach the position he desired before the boarders would be upon him, Reid gave the order to let go the anchor, and bend springs on the cable, so that he might wind the ship around and bring a broadside to bear if the enemy appeared astern or under her bows.

Miles saw that the *Carnation*, which had been making sad work of it with her sails in the dead air, had lowered four boats.

“What do you make out, Mr. Gadsden?” asked Reid; “can you see arms in the boats?”

“Aye, aye, sir, they are armed to the teeth and every boat is crowded—twenty-five or thirty men to a boat.”

“Muffled oars, too, eh? I guess they think we are all asleep.”

Reid turned and went back to the twenty-four-pounder “long Tom,” mounted on a swivel in the



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waist of the ship. When the leading boat got within hail, he called out:

“Ahoy, aboard that boat. Keep away from here or I’ll sink you!”

No response.

Twice Captain Reid repeated the warning, but the Englishmen only pulled the harder, and Miles could hear distinctly the order of the lieutenant in the leading boat—“Give ’way, men!”

Suddenly he heard a thunderous “Bang!”

The boat he was eying intently split up in pieces, with its occupants struggling in the water. Captain Reid could not have aimed his swivel more fairly.

In the midst of the excitement following the destruction of the boat, Miles saw an officer stand up in the foremost cutter. He waved his sword at those following and yelled:

“Let them have it—FIRE!”

Above the confused cries and exclamations of the men struggling about the wreckage of the splintered boat, the order rang out over the moonlit waters of the little bay. Miles saw the men about him stoop for the protection of the bulwarks, and instinctively he, too, stooped till he felt that his head was below the hammock nettings. There came an irregular rattle of musketry, and he heard the singing of the bul-



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lets over the ship's side. He had caught his breath quickly at the pop of the first gun. Now he let it out quickly with a great sigh of relief at finding himself unharmed. As he straightened up he saw in the boats several standing figures silhouetted against the dancing light on the water; he heard a mixture of confused calls and commands, when, suddenly, he saw flash—flash—flash—from three of the silhouettes. A bullet spanged into the mast back of him, and he saw Lieutenant Worth clasp his hand to his side and fall on one knee.

“Help him below!” called Miles to two of the men who had jumped to Worth's aid.

The rattle of the muskets all along the ship's side continued, when suddenly in a moment's lull in the firing he heard a voice crying:

“Quarter! Quarter!”

“Peering over the bulwarks he saw that two of the boats had got within half-pistol shot. In the nearer of the two boats was an officer standing with only three or four of his boat's crew on the thwarts, while the rest were huddled in pitiful confusion or sprawling over the gunwales.

“Quarter!” again cried the officer as he waved his cocked hat.

Miles heard Reid cry: “Cease firing!”



## A DESPERATE DEFENSE

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"Cease firing!" repeated Miles as he sprang forward to knock up a musket in the hands of a tall young sailor who was resting his piece on the bulwarks. The shattered boats pulled away as the men aboard the *General Armstrong* for a moment broke discipline, and started to crowd to the side to watch the receding barges.

"Back to your stations!" shouted Reid, and they sprang back to their posts.

Captain Reid walked the length of the deck and made a hurried inspection of the damage done.

He then hauled in close to the beach, where he moored head and stern within half cable's length of the governor's castle, and again prepared to receive an attack.

"You will take Johnson's place as acting third lieutenant," Captain Reid said to Miles. "I have put Williams at Worth's station and Johnson is acting as second lieutenant in Williams's place."

Miles was, of course, grateful for the confidence reposed in him; but there was no time for any exchange of civilities, so he hurried to his new post as Reid began delivering instructions to the gun crew of the "long Tom."

As the survivors of the cutting-out party regained their ship, there were angry shouts and oaths that



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could be heard above the calm water. Lights twinkled. Suddenly rockets shot up in quick succession, answered by a flash from the flagship of the squadron. Then from the *Carnation* again came sounds of bustling activity—creaking blocks, shouts of the officers and mates, and the rattle of davits. There was now no effort at concealment. The surprise attack had failed; now a force should be sent that would overwhelm the Yankees by sheer weight of numbers.

Anxiously the Americans waited the onset, but the minutes went by in silence. At the first sound of shots the townspeople had come tumbling out of their cafés and dance halls, looking for advantageous positions from which to witness the fighting. From his station Miles could hear their excited chatter on the housetops near by; for these people, Miles reflected, the coming slaughter was simply a theatrical entertainment, and it seemed to him, for the minute, that he hated them more than the enemy he was soon to be fighting.

In order to relieve the nervous tension of waiting, Captain Reid found this and that detail to be attended to. Miles was ordered to haul taut the boarding nettings on the port side. These Miles had never seen rigged before; they were stout nets, made



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of one-inch rope and about ten feet wide, spread along the bulwarks, and made fast to the shrouds and the yardarms. They were an admirable form of defense in the boat attack which was expected, for the boarders would have to climb up the sheer side of the vessel and cut their way through the nettings before they could set foot on the deck of the *Armstrong*.

Miles knew that Reid's case was a hopeless one, but the more he thought of the difficulties the Englishmen would face, in spite of their superior numbers, the more he felt that there would be a desperate struggle before the end came. The four nine-pounders on the port broadside were loaded with grape, and the twenty-four-pounder had a stand of grape added to her round shot. These were certain to do fearful execution in the boats at close range as they came on in the bright moonlight.

While Miles was in the midst of these reflections, a small boat came out of the shadows near the shore, and made directly for the privateer.

Miles hailed, and recognized, in reply, the voice of Charles Dabney. Once more the messenger scrambled on board and reported to Captain Reid.

The captain called the officers aft:



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"Gentlemen," said he, "Mr. Dabney has made formal protest to the governor of Fayal against the conduct of the *Carnation* in attacking us. The governor protested to Captain Lloyd of the *Carnation* as well as to the captains of the *Rota* and the *Plantagenet*, which, it seems, are the names of the frigate and the razee with her. He has received word that Lloyd will take us if he has to knock the town to pieces! You know what to expect from him. You know what I expect from *you*."

"Aye, aye, sir!" was the murmured response, and the three went back to their stations.

About nine o'clock Miles's keen eye saw the *Carnation* begin to draw in shore, towing twelve heavily loaded barges in her wake. He quickly reported to Captain Reid, who watched the enemy for a moment through his night glass.

"Ha!" he said, "she has anchored and the boats have cast loose. We are in for it again! Lloyd is such a reckless fool that he is known as "Mad" Lloyd, and you may be sure he'll stop at nothing to take us. They're coming, lads!"

The men, high-strung, impatient at the delay, welcomed the news with a subdued murmur that would have been a cheer under different circumstances.



## A DESPERATE DEFENSE

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"Here, Gadsden," said Williams at his elbow, "take off that lubberly hat of yours and put this on. It's the only thing in a boarding scrimmage. Captain Reid sent it."

Miles took it. It was the head gear devised and worn by the American seamen in the War of 1812, a round bearskin cap with lappets that tied down, protecting the ears, and the crown distended by two flat hoops of steel laid crosswise.

He had hardly settled it on his head when "click, click" came the sound of oarlocks so distinctly that both he and Williams jumped to their stations.

There was no effort at concealment or surprise. On swept the twelve long barges in line, each with a howitzer in the bow. Miles climbed up on a gun, and, by counting the men in the foremost boat, he made a rough reckoning of the advancing force.

"Whew! Four hundred at least! And ninety of us here!"

He felt carefully of his pistols, laid his cutlass where he could pick it up instantly, and waited.

Would Reid never fire the "long Tom"?

"Crash!" A yell leaped from friend and foe as the charge tore through the foremost barge with fearful effect. For just an instant the attacking party



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wavered, for some of the grapeshot had flown well down the line. But the next minute they gave three rousing cheers and the boats sprang forward.

Reid hurried to the rail, and then said in a low but tense tone that carried clear to the men at the bow chaser:

“Fire at will and reload quickly!”

Miles repeated the order and the nine-pounders belched. Then he seized a powder boy by the arm and swung him at the ladder as he yelled:

“Tell ’em to rush those cartridges—they’re coming on again!”

Then he turned to urge the gunners to more speed, though driving was not necessary, as the men at the guns were working with a will. The gun just opposite the after hatch was again ready first, and he saw an old, bush-browed gunner, naked to the waist and with his head tied up in a flaming bandana, touch a slow match to the primer and step back on his toes to avoid the jar of the concussion—the habit of an old man-of-war’sman. With the thunder of the nine-pounders there came screams of agony from the water and cheers and jeering taunts from Reid’s men. But, in a moment, as Miles looked over the bulwarks, he saw a boat so near the side of the ship that men with boat hooks in their hands were



## A DESPERATE DEFENSE

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rising from the mass in the barge, ready to make fast alongside.

All the boats were too near now for the "long Tom" and the nine-pounders to be depressed sufficiently to be directed on them. In another moment the boats deployed according to a well-planned scheme of attack, and all were menacing the side of the ship at the same instant.

This was the first fighting at close quarters that Miles had ever seen. Under different circumstances he might have lost his head at first and cut and fired without deliberation, but during the long waiting he had come to realize the desperate nature of the coming fight and the necessity of making every stroke or shot count.

He leaned over, fired into the boat below, and hurriedly reloaded. Suddenly it seemed as if the bulwarks were alive with scrambling figures. Miles made his two pistol shots count for two heads that loomed before him. The next instant he hurled his heavy pistol in the face of an officer who was drawing trigger on him. His pistols being useless, he grasped his cutlass, and cut and thrust at the writhing, struggling mass of invaders where nothing missed. He saw a man with a powder-blackened face, a cutlass in his teeth, climbing up the boarding



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netting in front of him. Instinctively he lunged at him, and felt his blade turn in his hand. He gripped it tightly and drew back. The man on the netting dropped backward, his cutlass rattled against the ship's side, and he hung with one foot caught in the net. A sailor jabbed it with a pike and it disappeared. Around him at first blazed the muskets of the privateersmen; then they swung their clubbed muskets and cutlasses, for there was no time to load. From the defenders came only a few hoarse growls and exclamations, for they had no breath to lose. But the English, exasperated at their failure to sweep the decks at the first onslaught, were cheering, shouting, cursing, screaming, while they hacked with cutlasses at the obstinate nettings. From the deck came thrusts of cutlasses, pikes, and bayonets, or crushing blows from clubbed muskets and handspikes that sent the boarders either pitching downward on their comrades, or into the bloody water. Indeed, the constant splashing seemed to be always in Miles's ears, and somewhere in the corner of his brain he was wondering if one could count the casualties by the splashes, while the rest of his mind was concentrated in the fierce endeavor to beat down the enemy just opposite him.

In spite of lightning cuts and thrusts, the group





“ Williams collapsed, and fell into the arms of a little powder monkey ”







## A DESPERATE DEFENSE

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of attackers in front of him seemed to increase in size. Ah! Now they had cut a big gap in the nettings. Suddenly Miles caught a blow that knocked him backward, with a shower of stars in his eyes. A British cutlass had landed fair, but was deflected by the steel in his cap.

The blow stunned him for a moment, but he struggled to his feet and staggered about wondering where he was and what had happened. His eye lit on his fallen cutlass, and as he saw its bloody point he partly came to himself, picked it up, and hurried to join the line of struggling men. Just at his side he heard a voice cry excitedly:

“Catch him—quick!”

Turning he saw Williams spin around, collapse at the knees, and fall into the arms of a little powder monkey, who staggered and caught at the fluke of the sheet anchor in an effort to steady himself under the weight that had struck him. The stricken man was laid in the forward hatch, a purple hole showing in the center of his forehead. Miles turned and looked about the deck in a dazed impulse to avenge the death of his comrade.

To his dismay, he saw that the Americans on the forecastle were wavering. They were nearly exhausted by their continuous efforts, and they had seen



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their officers fall. Miles staggered forward with a shout of encouragement, but at that instant he heard the welcome voice of Captain Reid behind him. In a moment a reënforcement from the quarter-deck, led by the burly captain himself, swept by. There was a brief scuffle at the forward rail, then silence.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### DEFEAT WITH HONOR

MILES looked up and down the deck. He could scarcely believe his eyes, but he saw not a single Englishman on the bulwarks. The attack of four against one had been repulsed! The reaction was so great that his knees suddenly gave way and he dropped utterly exhausted against the capstan. His eyes closed, and for a moment he lost consciousness.

"Not much hurt, I hope?" a voice inquired anxiously, and as Miles sat up he saw Captain Reid bending over him.

"No, sir, I seemed to tucker out all at once," he said weakly as he regained his feet and leaned against the capstan.

"Good; you'll feel better in a few minutes. By George, you gave a good account of yourself, lad. Now I must find out how Worth and Johnson are."



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“Are they hurt? Poor Williams is dead, you know!”

Reid, without replying, turned away. Miles glanced at the hatch at his back, but there was nothing there. Williams had been carried below.

In a few minutes Miles was able to walk the length of the deck. He had the curious experience of being unable at first to relax his grip on the hilt of his cutlass. So long had he held it tightly grasped in his hand that it was a full five minutes before the fingers would open.

As he walked aft, the sight that met his eyes was horrifying even in the merciful moonlight. Over the rail he could see in the distance five or six boats creeping with groaning loads back to the ships. Several of the barges had been sunk by cannon shot dropped into them, others still lay alongside, freighted only with the dead.

The bulwarks, hacked and scorched, still hung with tattered remains of the boarding nettings—all dripping and dyed with the life blood of the brave Englishmen who had been sacrificed to “Mad” Lloyd’s terrible blunder.

Miles met Captain Reid coming up from the cockpit.



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“Are our losses heavy?”—he began.

“Williams is killed, as you know, and both Worth and Johnson wounded. Burt Lloyd, a seaman, got a bullet in the heart, and five others, including the quartermaster, have had trifling hurts—that’s all! Incredible, but it’s a fact!” In other words, the combined losses of the privateer during the two attacks had amounted to *two killed and seven wounded*; and the second attack had been followed by three quarters of an hour’s desperate hand-to-hand fighting! The British loss could only be guessed at, but Miles knew that it had been appalling.

“They won’t bother us again right away,” added Captain Reid, looking over the scene of carnage around them, “but they’ll get us in the morning with their broadsides and we’ll have to clear out.”

Carefully the crew of the privateer laid their dead and wounded in the captain’s gig and carried them ashore under the castle. There they found Mr. Dabney awaiting them, ready to convey the injured to a place of safety.

Then the Yankees, at their captain’s order, collected their effects and brought them ashore also.

“One more whack at ’em, lads!” said Reid



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cheerily when everything had been saved that could be moved, and back the men went to their stations. At dawn the *Carnation* sailed close in and opened with her broadside, but her gunnery was so wretched that not a man on the privateer was hurt. On the other hand, the *Carnation* herself was driven off with badly cut rigging. But when she came down again with her guns double-shotted and the other ships in readiness to assist, Miles knew that nothing could be done further on the privateer. He was not surprised, therefore, to hear the order to abandon ship. Captain Reid, with Miles's aid, depressed the "long Tom" and fired it down the main hatch so that the British colors should never be hoisted over the deck that had been so gallantly defended. At the discharge of the gun, the men quietly dropped into the boats, as orderly as at a drill; Captain Reid followed, with the flag around his arm, and gave the word to make for the shore. Then, just as the privateersmen disembarked, they saw the crew of the *Carnation* boarding the sinking vessel. A minute later, red tongues of flame licked out of her ports and she burned till the waters closed over her decks.

When Miles reached shore he took leave of Captain Reid, for he knew that the Dabneys would be



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anxious indeed to know how he had fared during the terrible conflict of the night.

“Let me thank you, Mr. Gadsden, for your services—they were invaluable,” said Captain Reid in parting, just as the gray dawn showed over the house-tops.

“You are very kind, sir,” replied Miles, “but I must thank you for allowing me a chance to take part in such a fight. Good-by, sir.”

“Good-by. I hope to see you later in the day.”

Miles hastened through the city to the American Consulate. Needless to say, there had been no sleep there that night, and Miles's arrival, safe and sound, brought unutterable relief to those who had become attached to him during the five weeks of his stay with them.

After telling his story as briefly as he could, he fairly collapsed from exhaustion, and fell into a heavy sleep on the lounge where he sat. There he lay like a log till noon. On awaking, he was horrified to find his clothing stiff with blood. His shirt was slashed and torn almost in rags and his face and arms were black with powder. He was stiff and sore, and his head ached from the concussion of the guns as well as from the blows he had received; but he



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was anxious to be on hand in case there were fresh developments between British tars and Yankee privateersmen.

After a bath, a change of clothing, and a hasty meal, Miles hurried into the street. As Mr. Dabney had been out since early morning, Miles had to forage for news on his own hook. After a minute's walking he began to hear shouting and the confused sound of a crowd of people in the direction of the cathedral. He quickened his pace to a run and soon came within sight of the square.

The place was black with people, and belated ones like himself were running to join the throng. From the crowd rose a mixture of hoarse, hooting shouts, hisses, and occasional shrill cries in Portuguese; and underlying all these sounds was the low, rhythmic throb of muffled drums.

As Miles shouldered his way into the edge of the crowd some one said: "Un Inglese." At this an apoplectic-looking Englishman, standing in the front rank, evidently a traveler, turned and saw Miles. At once he reached back, shoving away his neighbors, and, catching him by the arm, helped him to the front. "Evidently," thought Miles, "he takes me for a fellow-countryman." The hat and suit Miles wore he had purchased from an English merchant in



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Fayal and were of a distinctively English style; so Miles decided to play out the part.

As he came in view of the procession his new companion said mournfully:

“Look, me boy, that’s the result of last night’s affair with the Yankee pirates!”

Miles saw a long file of sailors and officers from the squadron winding through the square, and up into the outskirts of the town. To every six men was a crude coffin covered with black. It was tipped with a sword and cocked hat in the case of an officer, and plain in the case of a seaman. The disturbance Miles had heard came from the jeers of the rougher element among the Yankee privateersmen who stood here and there in the crowd, taunting the Englishmen. The latter glowered in silence, saving up for the time when, having broken ranks, they could settle with their enemies wherever they found them.

“How many did we lose?” asked Miles in an awe-struck tone which was genuine, for he could not help wondering how many of these silent forms he himself had been responsible for. Somehow the glory of warfare that had intoxicated him the night before faded in his mind at this somber spectacle. It seemed horrible to reflect that men of the same blood



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and language, with no personal grudge in the world, should have been flying at each other's throats. Still, he knew that he had fought in self-defense, and, indeed, that, from the American point of view, the whole war was a blow in national self-defense.

He was roused from his reverie by the reply of the Englishman.

"Lose? I've been here an hour and still this dreadful procession goes on. I was talking with Mr. —what's his name—our consul here, you know, and he said that he got it from the officers themselves that upward of 120 are dead and 130 wounded, among them Commodore Lloyd himself, with an ugly grape-shot wound in his leg. The consul said, too, that the Yankees lost only about a half dozen in all, but I can't believe that."

He chattered on, eager to tell all he knew about the fight and commenting with great zeal on the fiendish, cutthroat character of the whole Yankee nation, while Miles half listened as he watched the melancholy procession.

"I say!" The Englishman suddenly dropped to a confidential whisper behind his hand. "Don't breathe it, but the consul told me in confidence of a capital scheme to bag these cutthroats. You know we have a treaty with Portugal for the returning of



deserters. Well, there's a nigger seaman got away from the *Plantagenet*. Lloyd will demand all these Yankees from the Portuguese governor—he's a jelly-fish sort of chap—and examine 'em for deserters. Don't you see? Disarm 'em, begad, and make 'em all prisoners! Pretty good, eh? Capital, capital, I call it!"

Miles was listening now with both ears. "Well," he replied, "that's topping, old chap, but I can't stand this spectacle any longer; it's too depressing." And, bowing politely, he squirmed his way back through the crowd away from his garrulous acquaintance.

As soon as he was clear he ran zigzag through side streets and alleys, taking a short cut to the quarter of the town where most of the Americans had found temporary quarters. He hoped to find Captain Reid, or at least one of his men to whom he could explain the situation and who could get word instantly to the captain. After a half-hour's search he suddenly came across Captain Reid and Mr. Dabney walking arm in arm. Miles was so much out of breath that he had some difficulty in getting out his story.

"I'm satisfied we're to have trouble," said Mr. Dabney when Miles finished, "and that pretty soon."



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“Aye, this is serious news,” said Reid thoughtfully. “Dabney, I’ll get my crew together to-night and march them out of the city under arms. We ought to find a place where we can make ourselves secure.”

“If you take the road that leads past the old castle down here,” said Mr. Dabney, “you’ll come after a couple of miles upon an old stone convent—a regular fort in itself, which has been deserted for fifty years.”

“Fine—just the thing. Good-by, Dabney, for the present. Gadsden, come with me a moment; my quarters are within pistol shot and I have something for you.”

There were two warrant officers and several seamen on duty before Reid’s door, and these he instantly dispatched to pass the word to the members of the crew who were scattered through the town. After showing Miles into the little room he had secured as lodgings, Captain Reid took up a sword that lay on his bed.

“Here, lad; this sword was picked up on the forecastle that you helped so well to defend. Some English officer dropped it when he went over backwards, I reckon. You can see how the belt was cut through so that belt and scabbard fell beside the



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blade. You'll want it as a keepsake, and it's a beauty. Now, if you need to join us for any reason, you know where we'll be; but I don't think there'll be any more fighting. Good-by—and a thousand thanks for bringing me the news. I must work now to get my boys together."

"Thank you, sir, a thousand times!" cried Miles as Captain Reid hurried away.

He took the sword with its belt and scabbard, and strolled down to a stone bench on the quay where he could rest a moment and examine his weapon. It did not take more than a glance to show that it was no ordinary side arm. Its balance was perfect; the hilt was of gold and mother of pearl, and the pommel consisted of one huge amethyst. But this was merely a matter of ornament. As Miles drew out the slender blade, he stared with open-mouthed admiration and delight. It was not bright and glittering, like the ordinary sword, but of a dull blue color, full of countless wavy lines; and near the hilt were cut curious signs, suns and crescents, with an inscription in oriental characters. As he tried the temper, he found that he might bend the blade double and the point would leap back, true and straight.

While he was gloating over these details of his



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treasure, he heard two or three times a curious, faint sound that seemed familiar. The last time it was loud enough for him to turn around with a start. It was that curious humming sound, the Aeolian harp—which Herk used to do to perfection.



## CHAPTER XIX

### SURPRISING ENCOUNTERS

**A**T first Miles saw nothing but a couple of garrulous fishwives, and a gendarme leaning half asleep against the wall. But just as he was on the point of turning back again, something bobbed up in the window of a little ruined warehouse. Another second, and two staring eyeballs seemed to pop out of the darkness.

“Marse Miles!” came a voice in a hoarse whisper.

There was no doubt now about its being Herk; and Miles, wondering, followed a gesture from the negro and hurried into the little dark alley behind the warehouse, where they could meet unobserved. Miles whistled softly and Herk’s woolly head with its brass earrings bobbed out of another window like a jack-in-a-box, his teeth shining and the whites of his eyes rolling.

“Bless Gawd, Marse Miles!” cried the black



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fellow, "'deed I'se glad to see yo' ag'in!" and he climbed down the wall of the warehouse on a piece of pipe like a huge ape. Miles saw that he was dressed in a British sailor's uniform, which stretched tightly over his huge body, where it had not been split open.

"Come now and tell me all about it," said Miles, leading the way to a spot behind a huge rusty anchor in the ship chandler's yard nearby. "How did you get here of all places on earth? Tell me quick!"

"Yassir, but kin yo' git me a li'l snack o' col' vittles or sump'n? Ah ain't et sence yistiddy evenin' nor yo' po' father neither."

"Father!" shouted Miles, jumping forward and seizing the shoulders of the negro, "what do you mean?"

"Don' mek so much noise, Marse Miles!" expostulated Herk. "Dey'll ketch us hyar ef yo' don' watch out. Climb up in de house, Marse Miles, an' yo' kin see."

He crouched, Miles sprang on his shoulder as he used to when climbing the big cherry trees in the back garden at Annapolis. From Herk's broad shoulders Miles got a good grip on the tile-pipe just above and, with a vigorous boost from below, went



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scrambling up to the little window. Another moment and he had sprung through on to the floor of the old warehouse.

“Miles, my boy, my boy!” called a familiar voice. “I thought we’d find you!”

Miles stared blankly for an instant in the darkness of the little loft. Then he saw a beloved figure half lying on a pile of straw, one arm in a clumsy bandage and the other outstretched.

“Father—oh, daddy, you’re alive, you’re alive, you’re alive!” and Miles was on his knees beside his father in a flash, his arms about the other’s neck. For a few minutes both asked questions at once, without even waiting for answers. Finally, Miles insisted on knowing about his father’s condition.

“How are you hurt, father? Not much, I hope?”

“A lead slug through my forearm, laddy, that’s all; but I lost so much blood from it that I’m not very lively.”

“Thank God, it isn’t worse!” cried Miles; “what I must do now is to get you something to eat. We’ll talk without end when I get back and I’ll get back in a jiffy. Help me down, Herk!”

After a quick glance from the window to see that no British sailor or city gendarme was in sight,



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Miles slid down the pipe and made off with all speed to the market place. After buying a basket and filling it with bread and fruit, he was back again under the little warehouse window in a surprisingly short time. Miles gave his whistle signal. Herk promptly slid down the pipe and followed Miles back again with the basket strapped to his back.

"Now, son," said Mr. Gadsden, "while I eat, tell me what has happened to you and what news there is from home. Lad, I haven't had a word from any of you all since I sailed in the *Eagle*, two years ago!"

The color came back into Mr. Gadsden's face as he ate, and Miles, as best he could, told his story from the day he sailed from Baltimore to the bloody battle of the night before.

"Herk's told me a great deal," laughed his father when Miles appeared surprised at finding what his father already knew. "But I wanted to hear the tale from you. Well, well," and he stroked his son's head affectionately, "I left you a stripling and I find you a man. You have a good record for those years, lad; I'm proud of you."

Miles's cheeks burned at the compliment from the one source he valued most. "I had hoped, though, that you might have heard news from mother and



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Debby. Poor women, they must have worried much over us."

"But it's your turn to tell me your story!" cried Miles, eager to unravel the mystery of Carrington's statement.

"Here you are then," replied the elder Gadsden, settling himself more comfortably to ease his arm: "On November 16, 1812, we overhauled a very rich prize, the *Elizabeth*, of London, \$50,000 in gold specie and a large quantity of woolen cloth. It was our first and only prize. The next day I sent her to Baltimore under a prize crew. Just as we parted a British corvette came in chase; I drew toward her to divert her from the *Elizabeth* and she followed me. A sudden shift of the wind put us to leeward, and, after a long chase, we were caught. I had to strike the flag after the first broadside, for she had us at her mercy. When the lieutenant came on board to take possession, who do you suppose it was? You'd hardly believe it, but, as I live, it was that bogus lord I kicked down our front steps! Wait! Then I learned for the first time what the puppy's real name was. He was no other than your friend Carrington!"

"Carrington!" cried Miles, leaping to his feet with a gesture of rage.



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“Keep cool, laddy, we’re ahead of him now. But see what revenge he took. ‘Well met, Mr. Gadsden,’ he said, bowing with an ugly sneer, ‘the tables are turned now!’

“‘The last time I had the pleasure of addressing you,’ I said, ‘I did it with my boot, and I will gladly repeat the performance now.’

“The sailors alongside him grinned, and he went into a white heat of rage. I thought he’d choke. Finally, he flung down into my cabin, ordering me to follow. There I handed him my letters of marque without a word.

“He looked at them, and then, after seeing that nobody was around, coolly walked to the after port and threw them overboard.

“‘Go back on deck!’ he ordered. I went, and when he followed he called to his men:

“‘Seize this ruffian; he’s a pirate. There are no commissions in his cabin!’ Then he drew back and slapped me across the mouth. I sprang at him, but was bowled over by the prize crew, tied up, bundled into a boat and taken to the corvette.

“That was the beginning of the trouble of which I hope this day is the end. Carrington wanted me hanged at the yardarm right away for piracy. But when I told my story the captain, rough character as



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he was, refused to pass sentence. He questioned me and cross-questioned me as well as all of my men, and was satisfied, I think, that Carringford was lying. But Carringford's father was a rear admiral, and very influential in the admiralty. The captain took the course, finally, of simply putting off the case till we reached England. We went, as you did, from Plymouth to Dartmoor. After a year of misery there, I was called for to face trial on charge of piracy before a general court at Plymouth. The word came to me that I must expect hanging. Carringford had got his father interested in pushing the case, and a court was assembled which was practically ordered to find me guilty. I thought my time had come. I had not a witness to defend me. Carringford appeared against me and told his story with skill and plausibility. I, too, was allowed to tell mine, and the captain of marines, who was detailed to defend me, proved to be an able man. Apparently, Carringford's notorious record was against him, and while the court would not vote for acquittal it 'suspended sentence,' and held me only on a technicality for the jurisdiction of another court, in the meantime proposing to communicate with the authorities at Washington. Meanwhile, I went from one prison ship or prison pen to another. Finally, my case was again



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called at Plymouth. While waiting on the docks under guard, a few of us prisoners, all French but me, were massed in with a gang of raw recruits, most of them victims of the press gang. From the conversation I overheard among the marines on guard, I learned that an expedition was fitting out against one of the Southern ports in America. Suddenly, I saw a huge darky towering over the rest of the recruits. He was humming—you know how he does it! I rubbed my eyes, but, sure enough, it was that black rascal Herk, big as life or bigger. An idea struck me. ‘Where are you fellows bound?’ I asked a blubbering country boy near me.

“ ‘All be goin’ to yonder frigut,’ he said, pointing at the nearest of the ships in the squadron—the flagship *Carnation*—‘and I wish I wa’n’t,’ he whimpered.

“ ‘Change with me, I’ll take your place,’ I whispered, ‘and when they find you instead of me, they’ll send you back home, while I’m doing your work on shipboard.’

“He was a stupid clown, and I had to explain over and over again before he could understand what I proposed and be persuaded that he would not suffer. My idea was that by getting on the same ship with Herk we two could manage to escape as soon as



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we reached American waters, or sooner. Anyhow, it was better than hanging, and I hoped to hear from Herk news of home and you.

“ Well, the exchange worked smoothly; when the sergeant of marines ordered ‘ Step lively there, crew of the *Carnation*, I stepped lively along with the others of the pressed seamen, leaving my country friend standing with the French prisoners. I managed to work my way toward Herk, and when I made myself known to him he nearly spoiled everything.”

“ ‘ Deed, I was so scared and flim-flabbergasted I jes’ let out a whoop! ” explained the negro who was sitting by, an interested listener.

“ Quite right, you did,” laughed Mr. Gadsden, “ but nobody took the trouble to investigate the reason for Herk’s sudden burst of noise, and we were all bundled on board the *Carnation*.

“ There for two weeks I have lived the life of a British tar under a ‘ smart ’ captain, and there have been many times that I wished I were back in Dartmoor. However, I was handy enough to escape flogging, which Herk, poor fellow, was not.”

“ Lawdy, Marse Miles, dey done mos’ whip mah back off! ” groaned the poor fellow, shaking with a sudden recollection of the cat o’ nine tails.



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“Don’t interrupt!” warned his master severely, “the rest of the story is short. When we reached Fayal, Herk told me it was where you had been put off, so I arranged a plan by which Herk and I were to go ashore on liberty at Fayal, or swim ashore at night and desert to the hills behind the city. As it happened, when our squadron arrived, we found the *General Armstrong* here. I managed it so that Herk and I got into the same boat for the attack. I was compelled to join in that attack on my own countrymen, but I never dreamed my son was there firing upon me! Herk and I had a whispered conversation of a minute before we left the *Carnation*; we were to fire one musket without ball, fall overboard as if hit by the privateer’s firing, and make for shore in the confusion. I was to give the signal and Herk was to fall in after me, both swimming under water as much as possible. As it turned out, I had the lead slug in my forearm just as I rose to jump over. I jumped with a real, ‘sure ’nuff’ groan. Herk followed. The crew of our barge was already decimated and in disorder; so, with Herk’s help, I managed to get ashore undiscovered, but faint with loss of blood. Herk found this hiding place for me before daybreak, and here we’ve been ever since. The doorway below is barricaded because



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in the street on this side Herk says he's seen British soldiers."

"To think that the slug might have been fired by a musket from one of my own division!" cried Miles, aghast at the thought that his own father had been among the men he had shot at.

"Oh, and there's some more to my story," added Mr. Gadsden; "our friend Carrington is on one of the vessels here in Fayal right now unless he was killed in last night's fighting. I saw him in the stern of the *Plantagenet* once when our squadron was on the point of leaving Plymouth. That's an added possibility of danger if we should happen across him here in Fayal."

"I'd like to happen across him, with a weapon in my fist!" Miles said savagely. "I have a big score to settle."

"Marse Miles," remarked Herk pathetically, "ef you kin fin' him, lick him a extry wallop for me. Frail him good."

"What did he do to you?" inquired Miles. "O'Rourke told me you had kicked the swab in the stomach the time you fought that Knetsen fellow."

"Yassir, I done let 'im have a li'l flip er de hoof, an' I guess he thought it wuz a mule kickin' downhill. But he suttinly did git back at me."



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"Jiminy!" cried Miles, "I haven't asked you yet how in thunder you ever got here, Herk! After seeing father, I shouldn't have been surprised to find the old Annapolis statehouse round the corner. Spin *your* yarn now!"

"Dey ain't much, cep'n after you done git took ashore, Mistah Carrin'fo'd had me whipped on deck. He wuz awful mad at your gittin' away, and 'bout gittin' hit wid mah hoof, Marse Miles, an' every week he'd tell the cap'n sump'n 'bout me an' git me licked ag'in before de ole sores wuz well. Lawsy mussy! it wuz awful, Marse Miles! When we gits to England dey sends all de prisoners off but me, 'cause Cap'n Lloyd of de *Carnation* he come 'board our ship while we wuz standin' roun' waitin' to be put ashore, an' when he sees me he say, 'Come here, you dam big nigger,' says he, 'I wants you!' He talks a minit wid de ossifer and den he holler, 'Come along, you be my butler 'board my ship, an' ef ye don' do right I'll cut yo' gizzard out!' I wuz awful glad to be on de same ship wid marster, but Cap'n Lloyd suttinly did make me sweat, an' knocked me roun' and flog me lak a New Orleans overseer. When we hit hyah, I say to yo' pappy, 'Fo' Gawd, marster, dis yer's de place whar dey puts off Marse Miles!' an' marster he say, 'Then, Herk, we'll get



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away right hyar ef we kin.' So hyar we is, Hallelujah!" and Herk grinned with sheer joy from one earring to the other.

"Here we is," repeated Miles, "but we can't stay here and the streets are full of British sailors hot for blood. They'll be on the lookout for you, father, and Herk as deserters," and the lad's face fell at the dismal prospect.

"Here, Miles," said Mr. Gadsden, "if you can bring me a cloak such as these people wear to cover my arm, a wide hat to shield my face, and a pair of Mr. Dabney's cast-off trousers to replace these sailor slops, I can walk to the consulate about sundown without raising suspicion. But you must give me a little map of the route. Poor Herk, though, has a bulk too big to find clothes for, and a complexion too pronounced to disguise. He'd better lie low in this loft awhile."

"Marster, you all don't 'low you'll leave me hyar!" cried Herk in dismay; "de rats and ghosts will git me sure 'nuff!"

"Rats and ghosts are better than Cap'n Lloyd," reminded Mr. Gadsden, and Herk, who had seen a deserter hanged at the yardarm in Plymouth Harbor, held his tongue.

"By the way, Miles," added his father, "when



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Herk came up after you he put a sword and scabbard in that corner—is it yours? ”

Miles, who had completely forgotten his treasure, brought it to his father and told the story of how he came by it.

“Now,” he concluded, “it’s nearly six o’clock and I must hurry to get your disguise and find some makeshift for Herk.” The next minute he was sliding down the pipe and then off to the consulate.



## CHAPTER XX

### MILES SETTLES A SCORE

ON the way to the Dabneys, Miles noticed with anxiety the crowds of rough, drunken sailors that reeled through the streets. Here and there a vigorous battle of oaths, fists, and clubs showed that British tar and Yankee privateersman were settling their grudges. Miles was protected, however, by his English civilian costume, and was careful to go through byways and quiet lanes to avoid any chance of collision. At the consulate he found Mr. Dabney out again, but Mrs. Dabney dug out of the garret the cloak, hat, and trousers for Miles's father and added a small flask of cordial. Equipped with these Miles threaded his way back again to the old warehouse.

It was an hour after sundown and the moon was just rising when, with Miles's and Herk's assistance, Mr. Gadsden reached the cobblestones below the little window. Miles watched him go with much mis-



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giving, for with the approach of night the uproar of the drunken sailors was increasing. Long before this the quiet tradesfolk had shut up their shops in alarm and hidden behind closed doors, while the gendarmes had also disappeared. Mr. Gadsden, however, insisted on going alone, leaving Miles to stay with Herk, who would have been utterly helpless by himself.

There in the darkness of the little loft Miles and Herk sat conversing in low tones. They had supped on the remains of the lunch Miles had brought, but the remains were too small to do more than put a stopping finish to the edge of their appetites. Huge rats were scurrying about them, and Herk began to hear "ghostes."

"Don't you hear sump'n creepy, Marse Miles?" he asked anxiously.

"Shut up!" Miles snapped impatiently, for he was worn with the nervous strain of the day's excitement. Moreover, he was anxious to the point of desperation lest his father should fall afoul of one of the bands of English sailors that were carousing through the streets.

Herk promptly held his tongue—he would gladly have cut it out if the master had ordered it—but Miles, though he could not see his companion in the



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darkness, knew that the poor fellow was hurt at his young master's unusual sharpness. "All the same," he reflected, "if it weren't for Herk I would be by my father's side now."

"Think about your master and his danger instead of your fool ghosts," continued Miles, trusting to justify his temper.

"Yassir," replied the darky humbly, and for a long time neither spoke. Miles sat with his head at the little window listening to the uproar.

The ships struck two bells. "Nine o'clock," whispered Miles to himself, and just then a bugle on each vessel sounded the recall. That was welcome music to Miles, for he knew that the sailors must at once get back to the boats. Now, over the din of the voices, drunken songs and laughter, could be heard the sharp commands of the officers driving their unwilling crews to the boats.

But though this continued for an exasperatingly long while, slowly the noise died away. By ten o'clock the little town seemed to have regained its normal condition. At length Miles rose, saying: "Come on, Herk, we'll risk it now. I can't stay here in this rat hole another minute. Where's my sword?"

Herk groped and found the sword, then the two



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slipped down to the ground ready to make the dash for the consulate.

"Marse Miles, I reckon I'd better git sump'n to wallop with ef we git in trouble."

"What can you get?"

"Hyah's a ole piece o' busted crowbar I done foun' an' hid in de corner, Marse Miles."

"Good, tote it along. Now, remember, keep perfectly quiet. We've got to get to the Dabneys without anybody seeing us or hearing us."

Miles then struck off in the direction of the consulate, but time and again he had to snatch at Herk and get him around a corner to avoid a knot of sailors who were being rounded up by midshipmen and lieutenants. Miles risked discovery once or twice by going near enough to see if any of these officers resembled Carrington, but there was no sign of him. On the two went, threading the dark streets. Scarcely half a mile now lay ahead.

"This is great luck," whispered Miles over his shoulder, "we are almost out of the woods now."

"Yassir, 'deed I hope we is," answered the darky aloud, forgetful of his orders.

"Halt, there!—Stand by, men!"

Before Miles and Herk knew what had happened, a British lieutenant stepped out of the dark-



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ness into the ring of light cast by the lantern at the corner. Four seamen came up behind him. Herk started to gasp, "Fore Gawd, Marse Miles"—when the officer, after a second's peering under his hat brim, exclaimed in a harsh voice that Miles remembered.

"Ha! Egad—two birds with one stone! Here's the nigger we're looking for and the puppy there is an escaped prisoner.—Well met, Mr. Gadsden!"

He dropped his hat in mock courtesy, and Miles saw the features of Carringtonford.

As the situation flashed on Miles, he saw its apparent hopelessness; but he could remember afterwards no feeling but overpowering anger and hate at the sight of the villain. Miles's mind could only entertain one thought: "This is the man who attempted to bring my father to the gallows."

"You dirty hound!" cried Miles, choking with rage at Carringtonford's epithet; "I'd like to settle with you, man to man!"

"Settle with me?" snarled the other, "you'll settle with me this bloody minute, you brat of a pirate! Arrest that nigger!" he cried to his seamen.

Miles ripped the scabbard off his sword, and had his blade ready in a twinkling to parry the



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cowardly thrust that Carrington, supposing him unarmed, made for his breast.

This sudden turn clearly surprised Carrington, but did not disturb him. A sudden medley of blows and shouts told Miles that Herk was giving a good account of himself against his four assailants, who, though superior in numbers, were much the worse for liquor. The negro had cunningly run up a side street about fifty yards, to draw off the seamen from attacking Miles, and then had turned on his pursuers.

"Ha, you bilgy swab," sneered Carrington after the first parry. "So you had your little tin sword by you! Never mind, my boy, say your prayers; you'll be dead in about two minutes. Ah, there I touched you, just for fun that time, you know! Wait till you feel cold steel in your ribs!"

Miles was so filled with hate for this man who had plotted the hanging of his father and had been the cause of so much suffering on the part of Herk, that he fought rather recklessly at first, underestimating the skill of his antagonist. Suddenly he felt the sharp prick of his enemy's sword in his left shoulder. Carrington's taunts were evidently designed to work Miles into a blind fury that would leave a wide opening for the final lunge.



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The realization of this and the prick of his enemy's steel, however, brought Miles to the necessity of playing his point coolly. Here was no cut and thrust *mêlée* behind bulwarks and hammock nettings, such as he had mixed in only the night before, but a set-to on even terms with a skilled swordsman who was determined to kill.

Miles now settled down to cool, careful sword-play, such as Lusson had taught him. Carringford, too, stopped his sneering talk when he discovered that Miles was not so easy to settle out of hand. The Englishman's blade was longer and heavier than Miles's, in that respect putting the latter at a decided disadvantage. On the other hand, Miles had managed to back around at the first onslaught so that the light from the street lantern shone in his enemy's eyes, a position from which Carringford failed to dislodge him.

Herk's rough-and-tumble fight sounded fainter and fainter as the knot of men went scuffling round the corner and up the street, leaving the two swordsmen alone. For several minutes they ground sparkling blades in simple lunge, parry and *riposte*, in quick succession; Miles, playing on the defensive to hold his position, and Carringford, angry at his inability to reach him, thrusting viciously. While



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the Englishman evidently depended on his longer weapon to overreach Miles's guard, Miles was keenly watching his enemy's tactics for an opening.

Then Carringford tried to get at his opponent by disarming him, as Lusson had done in the first day's fencing on the *Comet*, but Miles was not to be caught. Failing at this, the Englishman tried to get around Miles's guard by beating it aside and lunging with lightning speed. The sparks flew as Miles parried, but Carringford, losing his balance on a rough stone in the pavement, fell sprawling, his sword clattering out of his hand. As he fell, the point of Miles's weapon slashed up in the parry and tore an ugly gash in Carringford's cheek. Miles lowered his point and drew a deep breath.

"Get up, you beast!" said he. "I've marked you, but I'm not done with you."

Carringford, who had turned white on falling, expecting Miles to run him through, scrambled to his feet, livid with shame at his humiliation. After crossing blades again, Miles, noticing with satisfaction that his adversary showed signs of tiring, attacked aggressively. He himself, however, was feeling none too fresh, for he had not recovered from the exhaustion of the night before and had had little to eat for many hours. Carringford now



began parrying rather widely, and yet managed to protect himself when Miles thrust. A cold sweat began to break out on the Englishman's face, as he evidently realized that he was getting weaker every minute. On the other hand, Miles, much as he hated his opponent, suddenly felt sick at the idea of killing, and played his thrust and lunge only to disable him, aiming at the shoulders, arms, and thighs, and handicapping himself by this very mercifulness.

"If I can just cripple him so that he can never draw sword again, that will be a far better punishment than to kill him," reflected Miles; "I could never sleep with even that man's life on my hands."

Then he remembered Lusson's pointing out to him a spot beneath the deltoid muscle of the shoulder, that, if hit fairly with the blade, would cut the tendon so that, no matter how much was done afterwards, the arm would never be worth much. Accordingly, he made up his mind to play for that spot. Carringford was fencing wildly now, but Miles feared that it might be the man's trick to get him off guard. As he continued to fence carefully, a trick that Lusson had taught him came to his mind. Almost imperceptibly he crouched lower and lower. Suddenly, he dropped, and his left hand touched the ground for the fraction of a second, and at the same



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instant he sprang up under Carringford's guard and thrust for the shoulder. He could not have hit his spot more exactly.

The Englishman dropped, groaning and cursing. "I hope you've had enough!" said Miles, wiping his blade and shoving it back into the scabbard, "I present you with your life, which is more than you deserve. But you'll never draw a blade again, and you'll carry my mark on your face till you die. I wish you a long and painful convalescence!"

During the duel, some of the citizens had been interested watchers from dark windows overhead. As they saw the fight over and the Englishman lying helpless, they raised a hue and cry, calling for lanterns and whistling for the gendarmes. Miles, not stopping to discuss matters with them, hurried up the street, calling for Herk.

"Hyah—Marse Miles!" came the labored answer from an alley nearby. There he found Herk with three seamen lying before him, swinging blindly at a fourth who had pressed him into a corner and was jabbing viciously with his cutlass. A cut on the forehead was bleeding so profusely as almost to blind the negro, and he was badly slashed on the arms and legs.

"Run, or you're a dead man!" cried Miles,





“ He sprang up under Carrington’s guard and thrust for the shoulder ”







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rushing on the sailor, his sword whirling in circles over his head. The Englishman dropped his cutlass and bolted before this reënforcement, but did not get away without a cut across the seat of his trousers "to spur him to his best effort," as Miles told him.

On examination, Miles found that Herk's worst wound was the cut on the forehead, and this he bound up at once with his neckcloth.

"Come now, Herk, we'll have to be moving. They're making a lot of noise where I left Carrington and they'll make more when they see what you've left behind."

"Marse Miles, I knowed yo' could nail dat po' white trash," said Herk, as he picked up the discarded cutlass, "so I move mah rumpus roun' de co'ner, fo' fear one o' dem sailors mought take a lick at you."

"I knew it, you bully old tobacco brunette," laughed Miles affectionately. "Next time I get snappy at you—just say 'Rumpus' or 'Carrington.' " And Herk chuckled delightedly.

"Here you go!" said Miles suddenly, and, pulling Herk's sleeve, he turned sharp around a corner and ran up the steps of the consulate.



## CHAPTER XXI

### HIDING IN THE HILLS

AS the door opened, the first face Miles saw was that of his father.

"Safe and sound, all hands!" cried Mr. Gadsden delightedly. "I've been here an hour."

"You managed well, father," laughed Miles, "I struck a snag coming up."

"I found my way by following the cathedral tower and hugging the dark side of the street," said the elder Gadsden, "but what's—look at Herk!"

By this time Herk had appeared under the light of the hall chandelier, and his wounds showed up to their full advantage.

"I ain't mo'n just tickled a bit, marster," grinned the darky, "but I's pow'ful hongry!"

"He'd say that if his head were on the block," laughed Miles.

"Come, come, Miles, tell us the story!" cried Charles Dabney. "I'll bet there was a fight!"



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Mrs. Dabney, however, insisted on first attending to Herk's cuts, as she had already done to the wounded arm of Mr. Gadsden. Then, between mouthfuls of cold supper, Miles told of his duel with Carringtonford.

"Gee, I wish I'd seen it! cried Charles, "but why didn't you kill him—he deserved it?"

"You did right, Miles," said his father gravely, "no one wants to bear a man's life blood on his hands. In battle where one has to kill or be killed, it's different, but when you have an opponent at your mercy, it is too much like murder. Carringtonford is punished heavily as it is."

"Aye, you're right, Gadsden," assented Mr. Dabney. "Charley here is a young fire eater when he talks, but he really wouldn't hurt a fly. Now, while I don't want to break up this happy gathering, I must tell you that this fight to-night means serious trouble. Already to-day I have thwarted Commodore Lloyd so much in his efforts to get at Reid and his men that there's no telling where he'd stop. He's insane with rage now, and he's been so successful in bullying the cowardly governor here, that after Carringtonford turns up, he's not likely to respect the consulate at all—if he suspected you and Herk of hiding here—to say nothing of your father."



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"What, then, do you suggest?" asked Mr. Gadsden.

"Well, I think the best course is to take a pair of blankets and a basket of provisions and spend the next two or three days hiding in the hills. If you can, of course, you'd better join Reid and his crew where you'd be sure of the protection of numbers, anyway. It's nearly midnight now, and there's no time to waste."

Accordingly, an outfit consisting of tinder and flint, a basket of such provisions as could be found, blankets, a coffeepot and skillet, were hurriedly gotten together. In half an hour the three fugitives were stealing out of the back entrance of the consulate and silently making their way to the outskirts of the city.

At first, acting on the suggestion of Mr. Dabney, they tried to plan a route that would reach Captain Reid and his men in the old stone convent; but that meant a long, roundabout tramp of several miles in order to avoid passing through the city. Neither Mr. Gadsden nor Herk was in condition for this long journey. For the negro, especially, the saber cuts on his thighs made walking very painful. So, finally, after a mile and a half of uphill climbing, Miles said:



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"Father, what's the use of plodding along farther? There's a little cabin in the corner of that vineyard where we might just as well stop and take care of ourselves."

"Let's try it for a while, anyway," assented Mr. Gadsden; "what do you say, Hercules?"

"Yassir, I feel lak I kin lay down on a pile ob bricks and sleep till Christmas!"

The cabin Miles had noticed was a little stone hut used as a shelter by the grape gatherers in time of storm and to spend the night in when the work of picking was at its height. As he knew that the harvest had been gathered a week before, he decided that there was little chance of the shelter's being occupied. Shortly after they entered the hut and inspected the bare interior, all three stretched themselves out on the dirt floor and were sound asleep in an instant.

When Miles woke up, the cathedral bell was striking two. He rolled out, stiff and sore, and yawning, opened his eyes on Herk moving noiselessly about. He was placing some cold meat and bread on the top of a box and looked around as Miles got up. Mr. Gadsden lay still asleep.

"I'se pow'ful glad you done woke up," whispered Herk; "I feel lak——"



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"Hungry again, I suppose?" laughed Miles. "Well, so am I, and there's father stirring."

"I takes notice dat *you* is eatin' wid a comin' appetite, Marse Miles," Herk retorted petulantly. Miles laughed, for he knew what the darky feared. Mrs. Dabney had provided all that could be found in her larder, but when Herk finished with what Miles and his father left, there was barely enough to feed a sparrow.

"Jiminy, you didn't leave much!" cried Miles, anxiously eying the crumbs. "We are likely to have famine in the camp. There's no telling how long we've got to hide here and all our grub's gone!"

Their being in the vineyard had one advantage, for there were many odds and ends of bunches of grapes left hanging which were fully ripe and delicious. But there were so many people in neighboring vineyards that Miles did not dare go out of the hut till after the workmen had returned to the city. For the same reason he did not dare light a fire during the day lest the smoke lead to an investigation. By the time darkness came the three refugees were badly in need of water, though they felt that they could do without food for some hours yet. Leaving the hut, Miles and Herk explored till they



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found a stream tumbling down the hillside and there they quenched the thirst that had been saved up for so many hours and brought back the coffeepot full for Mr. Gadsden and for future needs. After securing their supper from the vines, they again retired to the hut.

The next morning Miles awoke early and looked out eagerly to see if the British squadron had sailed. To his disappointment, he saw that the ships were still at their anchorage and had been joined during the night by two more sloops of war. Mr. Gadsden slept nearly all day and all night, and the following morning, when Miles was making a fresh bandage for his arm, he said: "Father, don't you want to get up and move around a bit?"

"Lad," he answered, "I've lived on my nerve for two years, and all I want now is to lie still and rest."

Miles and Herk, too, soon acquired the habit—for there was absolutely nothing else to do with the heavy hours, but either Miles or Herk stood watch during the hours of daylight for fear of discovery. One heavy day after another dragged by and still the British squadron remained at anchor. The two sloops had gone—apparently back to England—but



the hateful forms of the *Rota*, the *Carnation* and the *Plantagenet* still swung to their cables.

By the end of the week, Mr. Gadsden took sufficient interest in life to sit up and talk with Miles of the thousand different things they had at heart, of their loved ones in Annapolis, especially, and of their country at war against the oppressor.

"It seems hard, father, that you and I, who tried so hard to strike a blow against the enemy, should have spent so much of our time in captivity, while others have gained glory all through the war. Wouldn't it be fine to be a member of the wardroom of the *Constitution*? Or even a fore-topman—think of her victories!"

"Never mind, we know we've tried our best, and that's all anyone can do. Besides, there has been no more gallant battle in this war than the fight off Pernambuco that you described to me, or that other right here in Fayal harbor. Be glad you had a share in those glorious fights, my boy. The *Constitution* has always outmatched her adversaries in guns and men. Those two fights were against tremendous odds. The honors are yours, Miles!"

"I wish I could believe it!" laughed Miles. "Everybody sneers at a privateer's chance of glory—I did myself, once."



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“Don’t worry about what other people are going to think. Remember, Nelson said England expected every man to do his *duty*, not to get his name in the papers—but what’s that?” pointing to the ships in the harbor.

The blue Peter—the signal for general recall—fluttered to the fore peak of the *Carnation*, accompanied by the puff of white smoke from her quarter and a muffled boom that echoed around the hills.

“They’re going, father!” cried Miles—“at last!”

“I do believe you’re right,” replied the other, and without another word they stared at the procession of boats, the swinging of yards, the dropping of sail, till finally the muddy anchors came dripping to their catheads, and all three vessels passed one after another out into the open Atlantic.

“Wake up, Herk!” cried Miles delightedly, to the snoring darky, “we’re done with grape juice for one long while!”

On seeing the ships round the harbor mouth and put to sea, Miles had announced that he was anxious to “hit the trail” for the Dabneys once more, but Mr. Gadsden advised waiting till sundown before going back where they would be readily recognized. There was only an hour to wait, however, long as it



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seemed, and then the three regained the highway and turned their faces toward the city. Going down the hill was far pleasanter than climbing, but after eight days of watery diet on grapes, and no exercise, the mile and a half between the cabin and the city along a dusty road was a tedious journey.

"'Deed, I suttinly was glad to see the las' of dat *Plantagemet!*" exclaimed Herk, heaving a gusty sigh of relief.

"Well, we'd better be careful yet," said Miles, dodging behind a hedge at the rumble of an approaching wagon. "Though," he added under his breath, "I declare I'd rather go to jail than eat another grape."

A half hour's walking brought them safely to the consulate, where Miles and his father were welcomed with open arms and Herk was installed in the kitchen.

"We were certainly worried about you," said Mrs. Dabney after Miles had finished what he modestly termed a "square meal." "We had no idea of your whereabouts after Captain Reid told us that he hadn't seen you."

"Where is Captain Reid?" asked Miles.

"Gone two days ago, with his men, in a Portuguese brig, safe and sound," said Charles Dabney.



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“ And left father and me behind! ” cried Miles in dismay.

“ Well, from the talk I heard the morning after your fracas with Carringford, it looked as if you would be left behind in jail if they ever caught you. The governor promised Captain Lloyd to get you and Herk if it took every man on the island to do it! But I happen to know that he didn't exert himself much. The delay in sailing was due, I believe, to Lloyd's hope of getting Herk hanged at the yard-arm as much as to getting the wounded back to England. But you are safe now.”

“ What about the search—did they force your doors here? ” inquired Mr. Gadsden.

“ Indeed they did! ” cried Mr. Dabney, reddening with anger at the recollection. “ Lloyd sent a ruffianly lot of blue jackets to surround our house; but, fortunately, a very gentlemanly officer conducted the search with as little offense as possible. It was lucky you three had gone! ”

“ Did they know of father's escape? ” inquired Miles.

“ No; apparently they thought he had been killed, because there were a number of bodies never recovered. But they were hot on the trail of you and Herk. You see, Carringford's father may be able to do much



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to promote or disgrace Lloyd, and Carringford's humiliation has been the gossip of the town and the fleet ever since it happened."

They talked on until late into the night, planning as to how the three fugitives could get passage to the United States. The chance of an American vessel's putting into Fayal was too doubtful to depend on, and it was finally decided that Mr. Gadsden, with Mr. Dabney as interpreter, should interview various shipping houses on the water front and try to get passage to some friendly territory.

Fortunately, Miles had still in his body belt some of the mate's wages he had earned on the Dutch brig. On the basis of this, he and his father rented a room in the neighborhood of the consulate, where they waited to get passage, and Herk worked out his board in the Dabney kitchen. Day after day father and son traveled from one shipping agency to another, or talked with ship's masters on the water front, and all for nothing. Finally, one captain agreed to give passage to the three to Vera Cruz, Mexico, where his ship was bound, on condition that Mr. Gadsden and Miles pay two hundred pesos and Herk work his passage.

Miles was low in funds and unable to pay the exorbitant price without borrowing half of it from Mr.



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Dabney. This he did not wish to do, because he was already under great obligations to him, and he knew that Mr. Dabney could not spare such a sum.

He was still puzzling his brains for a solution of his difficulty when Mr. Dabney hurried into the house one evening and shouted:

“Miles, good news!”

“What is it?”

“There’s a beautiful Baltimore privateer just in port. I met her captain not five minutes ago and told him about you. He says pack your duds, bring your nigger, and be ready at the landing in an hour. He’ll have quarters ready for your father after dinner.”

“Hooray!” shouted Miles. Then noticing a twinkle in Mr. Dabney’s eye, he asked with wide-opened eagerness: “Is it—can it be the *Comet*?”

“No, it’s the *Chasseur*, called the Pride of Baltimore,” replied the other with a laugh. “Isn’t that good enough, or must I find you the *Comet*?”

“Good enough! I’d welcome a greasy whaler pointed for God’s own country!” cried Mr. Gadsden. “You’ve brought us luck indeed!”

Miles flew about getting ready to go. He tried to express his gratitude to the Dabneys, but they refused to admit any obligation on his part toward



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them, for they had become very fond of him. Miles was down at the pier a full half hour before the appointed time and paced up and down, unable to take his eyes off the handsome lines of the Yankee clipper. At last the captain's gig came away and was soon alongside the pier. Miles and Herk jumped in, the coxswain ordered "give away," and they were off, with the Dabneys waving farewells from the shore.



## CHAPTER XXII

### FAMILIAR FACES

**I**N a few moments the boat was alongside the privateer. Miles stepped briskly up the gangway, but Herk, even though a step behind, got his head on a level with the deck first.

“O bless Gawd! Marse Miles, dar’s de ole cap’n!”

“Captain who?” Miles asked excitedly, but in another instant he was facing Captain Thomas Boyle, and behind him saw the delighted faces of Lusson and old Bill Todd. The surprise took his breath away, but before he could find words, Boyle had him by the hand, his face beaming; and Lusson and Gilmor were by his side, all laughing and talking together.

“Well met! Well met!” Boyle managed to make himself heard. “Away, you blatherskites, devil a word can I get in edgewise! Gadsden, I order you down to the captain’s cabin to tell me all



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about yourself. And I want to know what you did with that prize you promised to deliver in Baltimore!"

There was a great laugh at this sally, in which Miles joined heartily. Lusson and Gilmor insisted that they be allowed to "hear Miles draw the long bow," and followed to the cabin ladder. As Miles looked over his shoulder for Herk, he saw him clasp hands with Peggy and execute a wild dance of exultation. Every now and then he whirled the little Irishman so fast that his wooden leg beat a regular tattoo on the deck, while the seamen shouted with laughter. Suddenly remembering Todd, Miles broke away from Boyle a moment to have a word with his old friend. "Wait for me, Todd, till I finish my report to the skipper, and I'll come back and tell you the story of my troubles," he said as he hurried away again.

Established finally in the captain's cabin, Miles told the story of his adventures and mishaps. When he had finished, Boyle dismissed Miles and the younger men to the wardroom, where Miles learned the story of his friends' adventures since the *Lapwing* parted company with the *Comet* fully eighteen months before. From them Miles learned that Boyle had drawn ahead to pick up another prize, and before



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he could get back to sight the *Lapwing* the storm had come upon him. For three days the *Comet* had sailed without sighting one of her prizes, but gradually fell in with them as she neared the capes. All of them were the worse for the storm, but none of them foundered. Miles's fate could only be guessed. though the belief was that the *Lapwing* had gone down in the gale.

"What did Captain Boyle report about me?" inquired Miles at this point of the story, fearing that the news of shipwreck had reached his mother.

"Well," responded Gilmor, "he got me to help him cook up a letter to your mother saying, among other things, that you had got separated from the convoy by bad weather, and might be expected within the capes at any time, providing the blockading fleet didn't catch you. Thinking you might be a goner, the old man threw in a lot of complimentary lies about you, which I'm sure he'd never repeat," laughed Gilmor. "But he was sure-'nough worried about you—as we all were. By *Gad*, I'm glad to see you again!" and he slapped Miles on the back so enthusiastically that he nearly knocked him off his seat.

"Pipe down there, Geelmor!" objected Lusson.



“*Diable!* you’ll nevaire grow to be more zan a boy. Tell Gadsden what we did in ze Breetish Channel.”

“O, Miles, you missed a good time with us!” cried Gilmor. “You see, after we got to Baltimore, Boyle got command of this *Chasseur*, the finest equipped and the fastest privateer that ever sailed. Boyle reshipped us all, got a few new hands, and off we went in a week. He put the new men in the boat he sent you, by the way, so you wouldn’t find out who we were till you came aboard. Well, sir, since we struck British waters there’s been scarcely a day when we haven’t taken a ship, some days four or five. Then Boyle, for the fun of it, issued a proclamation putting all the coasts of Great Britain under blockade—the mistress of the seas! What do you think of that? The joke of it was, that everybody knew our masts and spars by sight, but although the frigates and sloops went after us hot-foot, they never could get within long gun range. It was rare sport!”

“But where’s old pepper-box Bradford?” queried Miles. “Not lost the number of his mess, I hope?”

“No; he went sick about a month ago, and couldn’t seem to get better aboard ship, so we put



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him ashore at Brest. Had a time running the blockade there, too."

"Who takes his place?"

"*Moi*, at your *sairveece*," responded Lusson with a wave of his big hand.

"Then you're second officer, I suppose?" looking toward Gilmor.

"Right, I am," responded Gilmor with a grin, "and one, Miles Gadsden, is third."

"What, really?"

"Surely, the captain told me as soon as he heard about you from Mr. Dabney."

This pleased Miles beyond words, but he tried not to make his pleasure too evident, for Lusson and Gilmor were both watching him with twinkling eyes.

"Now, tell us about that *Armstrong* fight," ordered Gilmor; "don't leave out a rope yarn or a cartridge!"

So Miles told the story—followed it by the discovery of his father and Herk, and then the duel with Carrington. This last interested Lusson hugely, and he went over Miles's tactics carefully, commenting and criticising severely, though really proud as a fond mother over a successful son.

"But I haven't had a word yet with the boatswain!" exclaimed Miles, interrupting a list of



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fancy tricks and sword play that Lusson was promising to teach him, and ran up the ladder.

“Bos’n Bill Todd!”

“Aye, aye, leftenant,” replied Todd, shifting his quid, and saluting with a twinkle in his eye. He had been waiting for Miles to come on deck.

Miles grabbed the tarry fist, with a “Jiminy, I’m mighty glad to see you again!”

“Now, sir, I’m off watch. If ye don’t mind, I’d like yet to spin a yarn ’bout what you and Hercumlees have been an’ done sence ye was cap’n of the *Lapwing*.”

Again Miles told his story. To Todd the most interesting part was the handling of the *Lapwing* in the storm, especially the construction of the sea anchor. As he expressed it, “a swab as can’t make two half hitches can swing a cutlass to save his own gizzard, but it’s another thing to be a seaman.”

When pressed to tell about himself, the only thing he could “recollect as important ’nuff to tell” was the fact that he now used Virginia Twist instead of Maryland Niggerhead, and was able “to spit a heap freer tharby.”

“Now, there’s one thing I’ve got to have right now, Todd,” said Miles. “I want to know the story of that ear.”



## FAMILIAR FACES

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“Will ye batten down your hatches over it an’ keep it dark as Egypt for evermore?” asked the boatswain, his eyes a-twinkle.

“Aye, aye, mum’s the word,” replied Miles, eager for the story of battle that he knew must be forthcoming.

“Wall,” with a skillful shift of the Virginia Twist, “it was like this: When I was a lad, an’ carryin’ a good spread o’ sail—a fearsome youngster I was, Mr. Gadsden—I took aboard a cargo of hard cider. When I was about three sheets in the wind, I hove anchor, careless-like, in a corner of my ol’ man’s barnyard. While I was sleepin’ sweetly, a heifer bore upon my bows and began chawin’ on the straw hat I had forgot to take off. Before she got through she had a part of my larboard ear, unbeknownst to her an’ me, too! Now, are ye satisfied?”

Miles had scarcely finished laughing when Captain Boyle called him to show him the watch lists and explain the details of his new duties as third lieutenant of the *Chasseur*. This work kept him busy until the cry, “All hands, up anchor, ahoy!” summoned him to the deck. There he found his father and Mr. Dabney standing by the gangway, where a skiff swung at her painter, waiting to take the consul ashore



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again. Captain Boyle greeted Mr. Gadsden warmly, and after many hearty words and hand clasps, the consul left his friends just as the *Chasseur's* canvas began to catch the breeze.

Miles waved his hand in a last farewell to his hospitable friend, and gave one final look at the two scorched masts of the *General Armstrong*, which still projected from the water. Then he hurried forward to attend to his duties as officer of the watch.

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The run from Fayal to American waters was accomplished smoothly and without incident. The wind held favorably on the *Chasseur's* quarter and no British sail was sighted. Miles was quick to learn the duties of his new position, and, having lost in his hard experience after parting from the *Comet* that bumptiousness that had counted against his success at first, he proved worthy of a berth with such fellow officers as Lusson and Gilmor.

"Miles," said the latter one day, as they were looking forward to making a landfall off the capes within a few hours, "it's funny to see what a fret the old man is in. He's got to send word to the owners in Baltimore and to the prize courts, too, on account of the tremendous business we did on this last cruise; but he's in a great sweat for fear peace will



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be declared before he can put to sea again. If there ever was a man who loved fighting and adventure for its own sake, it's our skipper."

"He must have done very well financially," observed Miles.

"Yes, that's the joke of it. He's cleared two hundred thousand dollars at least during this war, and he'd give it all up for one more fight such as we had off Pernambuco."

"Well," remarked the other, "we are almost home now, and not a prize have we taken since leaving Fayal."

"What's this I hear?" cried Gilmor in mock tragic tones, throwing up his hands in horror. "Miles Gadsden descending to the dirty profits of privateering! Where is your ancient devotion to pure glory?"

"If you allude to that speech again," grinned Miles, "I'll give you a love tap with a handspike."

"Ah, the old thirst for blood is there anyway!" sighed his friend. "By the way, now that I see I can refer to such matters without insulting you, the captain put your name on the books for a midshipman's share of the prize money for that first *Comet* cruise, and you'll find a tidy little sum drawing interest for you in a bank at Baltimore."



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“ Really? I’m mighty glad to hear it,” cried Miles. “ That was good of the old man! You see, I don’t mind owning up that I’m on my lee scuppers, financially.”

“ Sordid, very sordid spirit, Mr. Gadsden! ” said Gilmor, wagging his head solemnly as he turned to respond to a call from the cabin ladder.

Captain Boyle was clearly anxious, when, with his usual luck, he entered Chesapeake Bay without a glimpse of a blockading vessel and sped for Norfolk with every stitch of canvas spread. Hardly had he dropped anchor in the Elizabeth River, when he called away his gig and made for the city as fast as the oarsmen could ply their blades. Miles was officer of the deck at the time and he was surprised to see the gig rushing back to the ship in less than twenty minutes.

“ Any news, sir? ” inquired Miles, saluting, as his captain jumped on deck with beaming face.

“ News? ’Tis no news that’s good news this time. Everybody is expecting to hear that the treaty of peace had been signed, but the word hasn’t come yet. I must depend on you, Gadsden, to work with us all in getting our cargo ashore to the warehouse to-day. The lighters are coming off now. Then we’re going off for more game, d’ye see? I s’pose



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I can't tempt you to stay with us for one more lick at the Britishers? "

"No, sir," replied Miles. "You know my father's health is badly broken down by his hard experiences, and we've had no word from the folks in Annapolis. I am sure that I shall be needed at home. You know that I'd like to strike another blow for sailors' rights and the flag. Besides, I've a long personal score to settle yet."

"Aye, aye, I understand. I shouldn't have asked you, Miles," answered Boyle affectionately. "You're needed at Annapolis with your father and in your home. As a matter of fact, the first ship we speak will probably tell us that the war is over, and there's only a bare chance of another bit of fighting."

After doing his best to help Boyle all day to clear the ship of her rich cargo for immediate resailing, Miles, with his father, went ashore shortly after sundown and took up temporary quarters at a tavern. He was so tired that he awoke late and reached the docks the following morning barely in time to halloo his good-by as the *Chasseur* spread her sails for one last cruise against the Mistress of the Sea. Then he made arrangements with the captain of a small packet sloop to take him and his father as passengers to Annapolis.



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During the first joyous weeks after the home coming, Miles was so contented and happy that nothing could tempt him to leave the house he loved. There, before the wide fireplace, with its blazing logs of oak and chestnut, Miles and his father sat with mother and sister, drawn up in a cozy semicircle before the roaring blaze during the long winter evenings and lived over again in memory the hard experiences of the war. The only drawback was the fact that his father was slow in recovering his health, which had been thoroughly broken down by his hardships.

Soon came the news that the Senate had ratified the treaty of peace, and a few weeks later a fishing boat reported the *Chasseur* standing up the bay with a British sloop of war as a prize in her wake.

"I knew Boyle would get in another lick before peace was declared!" cried Miles on hearing the news. "Now for Baltimore! I must see those fellows again!"

Miles had postponed going to Baltimore on business for his father, simply from an unwillingness to leave his comfortable home now that he had finally got back to it. But here was an incentive indeed. Accordingly, he was off on the next packet for Baltimore.



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It was no trouble to find the *Chasseur*. All Baltimore was ringing with this final exploit of their favorite vessel, and Miles was soon shaking hands and laughing and congratulating his old friends once more at the very pier where he had shipped over two years before on the *Comet*. As the war was over, however, all hands scattered as soon as the vessel's cargo was unloaded and the prize money issued. Gilmor promised to make Miles a visit within the month. Lusson suddenly disappeared, bound for France, and Miles, again feeling very lonesome, found himself sitting alone in his room at the old Three Tuns Tavern, where the details of his father's affairs with the shipowners still kept him. He had had good news, for he learned that the rich vessel which his father's sloop, the *Eagle*, had captured that unlucky day when Carringford appeared, had reached port in safety, so that a substantial account lay to Captain Gadsden's credit. Moreover, Boyle had seen to it that Miles's share of prize money was paid promptly. But the money end of the situation was not in Miles's mind. Much as he loved his home, he had learned to love the sea, and to spend the rest of his days in Annapolis, managing the domestic accounts of his father's overseer, or checking up ledger entries in the shipping house, was a dismal prospect. Gilmor, for



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instance, had been offered a fine command, one of the East India clippers, and would continue to feel the deck planking under his feet, to hear the roaring of foam under the bows, and see the blue expanse of ocean about him. An old office stool! Bah! And yet the best command Miles could get would probably be one of the little freighters of Annapolis, which would be worse than staying in an office ashore.

While he was reflecting in this vein Herk came in, bearing a large package.

“Hyar, Marse Miles, one ob de men from the *Chasseur* saw me on de street and gin me dis yere bun’le fo’ you.”

“What is in it?”

“Dunno, Marse Miles, no mo’n you does.”

“By the way, Herk, you’ve been a mighty good servant—best in the world—and stood by me in many a tight place. Now for the tenth time I want to remind you that you have your freedom——”

“Look hyah, Marse Miles, what kin I do wid freedom? Ef I ain’t Marse Miles’s man, what is I?”

“Well, Herk, it’s hard to tell where I’ll bump around. I hate to stay put in one place, you know. You might want to marry and settle down.”



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“Marry! Bless mah soul, Marse Miles, I don’ wan’ no woman blim-blammin’ roun’ me——”

Miles burst out laughing at this and went to work to unwrap his package. To his great delight, he found in a leather case a brace of silver-mounted pistols with the inscription on the handle in flowing script:

“To my gallant friend, Miles Gadsden, from Thos. Boyle, in token of esteem.”

A little wisp of paper was wound on one of the handles, which Miles read:

“Don’t let that frog-eater Lusson make you think lightly of the pistol! Learn to use it. Good luck to you.  
T. B.”

Miles was delighted. The fact that Boyle—of whom he had always been at least a bit in awe—really liked him, pleased him more than the possession of the handsome weapons.

The following morning Miles was in his room, fondling his new pets while he was waiting for Herk to polish his boots, preparatory to a stroll to the water front, when he heard old Rudolf Van den Berg’s voice at the foot of the staircase.

“Lieutenant Gadsden! Oh, lieutenant!”



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Miles smiled at the subtle flattery of the title and answered:

“ Aye, mine host! ”

“ A nigger iss here mit a letter for you and he says dot you should write der antswer of it alretty! ”

“ Go down and get it, Herk, will you? ”

Herk, who was glossing his master's boots with the air of a painter finishing a masterpiece, laid down his work carefully and went below.

When he returned with the letter Miles did not recognize the handwriting. Breaking the seal, he read:

“ To Miles Gadsden, Gent., late lieutenant of the privateer *Chasseur*, Th'ree Tuns Tavern, Baltimore.

“ Sir: The Mayor and Council of the City of Baltimore request the honor of your presence at a dinner to be given on Thursday, May seventh, at Barney's Inn, in honor of Captain Sam'l Chester Reid and his glorious defense of the *General Armstrong* in the harbor of Fayal, September 26, 1814.

“ By order of his honor Edward Johnson, Esq.,

“ Mayor of Baltimore.

“ City Hall, March 30, 1815.”

“ This is the best news yet! ” he cried. “ Herk,” he laughed, “ you can't go to the banquet because you



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were on the wrong side! Run and get me to-day's *Gazette*; there ought to be some news about this dinner!" and Miles set himself to compose as elegant a note of acceptance as he could devise. By the time he had painstakingly copied it on the best paper the tavern could boast and signed it with three huge flourishes under his name, Herk came back with the weekly news sheet.

"Here it is!" cried his master after a glance, and read aloud the account with gusto. Captain Reid and other privateer officers were to be there. But best of all, his good friend, Captain Joshua Barney, was to make the speech "in honor of the distinguished guest."

Miles's spirits went up like a balloon, and he could hardly wait for the week to roll around.

At last the day, and better, the evening itself, arrived. Miles had arrayed himself in splendor worthy of the occasion, but as he wore civilian clothes, he felt that he did not present a very military sort of figure. He soon found that he had been invited only because he had been an officer under Boyle. But when Captain Reid saw him enter the hall, he immediately ran up to him, seized both his hands and pumped them violently.

"Mr. Mayor," he cried, turning to the master



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of ceremonies, "you were just now regretting that neither Lieutenants Worth nor Johnson could be here to-night. Mr. Gadsden, here, was my acting third lieutenant, if you please—a volunteer—and no man on the *General Armstrong* fought more gallantly!"

After that Miles suddenly found himself next to Captain Reid, the hero of the hour. A seat was hurriedly made for him at the table of honor next to Mayor Johnson, and he was besieged with attention.

"Take it all in, my boy," chuckled Miles to himself; "next year this time you'll be adding columns of figures for excitement!"

Late in the progress of the dinner there was a stir at the door, and four stalwart negroes entered, carrying in a chair a large man dressed in the uniform of a naval officer. Those sitting near the door instantly rose and cheered. Miles looked around and rose with the rest. Then he left his chair and hurried forward as fast as he could. It was Captain Barney; but Miles was only able to get in a few warm words of greeting at the time, for there was no opportunity for more.

Meanwhile, he learned from a fellow-diner the details of Captain Barney's gallant attempts to repel the English on the Chesapeake and at Bladensburg



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in which he had received the wounds that still disabled him.

After being announced by the mayor in grandiloquent terms, for Captain Barney was a Baltimore favorite, the bluff veteran read his speech from his chair. As a naval officer and a former privateersman, he said, he was well fitted to pay tribute to the work of the privateersmen in the war. He pointed out the fact that the reason England was anxious to gain peace was not because she had lost a few of her ships of war, but because the work of Yankee privateers had been so devastating that the rates of insurance in London were prohibitive and England's commerce was going to pieces. Referring to the defense of the *Armstrong* in no stinted terms—he showed what was news to Miles—that the squadron under Lloyd at Fayal was a part of the proposed expedition against New Orleans, and the week's delay arising from the tremendous slaughter of that battle made a corresponding delay in attacking New Orleans. As General Jackson reached New Orleans just three days before Packenham, the gallant fight by Captain Reid made General Jackson's great victory possible.

At this there was tremendous cheering.

“In recognition of his brilliant exploit,” contin-



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ued Barney, "Congress has just awarded our guest the rank of captain in our navy. And, at the request of the mayor and citizens of Baltimore, I am on this occasion to present to him this memorial sword."

Hereupon, amid great cheering, Captain Reid stepped forward and took from Barney's hands the ornate gift of the city and stood bowing for nearly five minutes till the applause subsided. His thanks were brief and enlivened by the remark that this was "the first time Barney had ever handed a sword to another."

"One more announcement," continued Captain Barney, and his eyes left the manuscript of his speech. "In recognition of conspicuous gallantry in the privateer service a commission of lieutenant has also been awarded to Mr. Miles Gadsden—my young friend here—who, as a volunteer, defended the fore-castle of the *General Armstrong* when every other officer but Captain Reid was down, and who was recently described by Captain Boyle as "as fine a fighter as ever smelt powder."

There was such applause at this that Miles himself was compelled, after much nudging, to rise and bow his acknowledgments, blushing tremendously.

"A lieutenantcy!" At first Miles hardly real-



ized what Captain Barney had said. Was it true the ambition of his life was realized, after all?

Through the rest of the speeches Miles sat in a daze—hearing not a word of the patriotic eloquence that flowed on, as Miles thought, unendingly. As soon as the formal toasts were over Captain Barney excused himself on account of his physical condition and beckoned to Miles to follow. Together they established themselves in the captain's room at the hotel where, as the veteran said, he could hear all about what Miles had done since they saw each other last.

Miles knew perfectly well why he had got his commission, that it was due to Captain Barney's persistent work in keeping his young friend's services before the Navy Department, for commissions do not come of their own accord. But when Miles, in his happiness, tried to tell how grateful he was, Captain Barney exclaimed with a fine pretense of impatience:

“Tut, tut, will you never keep still about that? Not another word! What I want to hear about first is that Pernambuco affair. Now, begin at the beginning and don't stop till I order you!”

The bluff commodore lighted a long clay pipe and “cleared ship for action,” as he said, by throwing off his gold-laced coat and sword and stretching out on



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the lounge where he could listen in comfort. Miles tipped his chair against the wall and mingled his tale of adventures with so many dreams of life on the deck of "Old Ironsides," with an epaulet on his shoulder, that his listener had frequently to call him to time. From the dining room below the tinkling of glasses and the hum of conversation were suddenly interrupted by the strains of a new song, "The Star-Spangled Banner," which Miles heard then for the first time.

"Let me hear that!" he exclaimed, and went to the open window. As he listened to the stirring lines he felt, over and above his happiness in attaining the ambition of his boyhood, the deep responsibility that such a position brought. In peace as well as in war, as a naval officer he was bound to represent the honor of that "star-spangled banner," and deep in his heart Miles vowed that he would never be unworthy of his trust.

THE END

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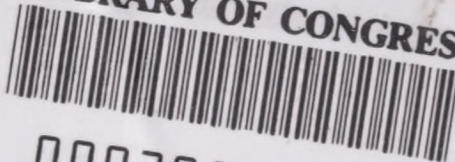
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